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ABSTRACT

A study explored learning and assessment experiences of Australian apprentices and trainees (A&Ts) using focus groups of 66 stakeholders in every state and territory; case study analyses of 20 diverse sites; and a national questionnaire of 595 A&Ts in motor mechanics and hospitality work. Stakeholders viewed apprenticeships and traineeships as serving objectives relating to entry to the labor market and provision of training pathways leading to nationally recognized qualifications. Approaches to learning and assessment varied by mix of learning and assessment undertaken, degree of formality, and extent to which they were undertaken by qualified trainers or left to employees working with A&Ts. Learning strategies that were interactive, treated learners as adults, and that were responsive to learning needs and styles were of greatest benefit. A&Ts had their learning and assessment expectations met, but that was more likely in cases where learning and assessment occurred in a combination of workplace and off-site experiences. A&Ts indicated each learning environment has its strengths and limitations. Achieving quality learning and assessment systems for A&Ts revolved around these two foci: (1) constant monitoring of the balance between needs of the enterprise and of A&Ts; and (2) developing and sustaining effective partnerships among A&Ts, employers, and training providers. (Appendixes include 74 references, instruments, case study profile, and additional data.) (YLB)

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NCVER Australian Apprenticeships

Evaluating on- and off-the-job approaches to learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships

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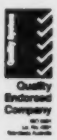

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Executive summary

This study sought to elucidate the learning and assessment experiences of apprentices and trainees in Australia. The objectives of the study were to:

- identify what different stakeholders in apprenticeships and traineeships expect apprentices and trainees to learn as part of their contracts of training
- identify and analyse the different approaches to learning and assessment that can be undertaken by apprentices and trainees as part of their contracts of training
- evaluate the extent to which these different approaches to learning and assessment contribute to the learning goals and needs of apprentices and trainees
- evaluate areas where improvements might be made to learning and assessment practices and the strategies and interventions that are required to bring about change

Data were collected in three different ways: focus groups with 66 key stakeholders in every State and Territory; case study analyses with 20 diverse sites; and a national questionnaire survey of 595 apprentices and trainees in two occupations—motor mechanics and hospitality workers.

While there was general agreement on the purposes of apprenticeships and traineeships, the study illuminated often quite different expectations held by stakeholders for these contracts of training. Respondents viewed both apprenticeships and traineeships as serving objectives relating to entry to the labour market and provision of training pathways leading to nationally recognised qualifications. These twin agendas gave rise to a range of expectations. Respondents expected that essential learning would include work-based skills and knowledge, along with a range of 'people skills', development of a 'work ethic' and fostering of attributes like flexibility and the ability to learn.

Yet there were notable differences in views on how best to organise learning and assessment. These differences centred on such issues as:

- the value of totally on-the-job learning
- the relevance of off-site learning and assessment
- the quality of vocational education and training (VET) in schools
- some training providers' capacity to support learning in the workplace and to provide reliable assessment services
- the lack of current knowledge of industry needs held by some staff in training providers
- some training providers' difficulty in monitoring quality of on-the-job learning and then dealing with any subsequent gaps or deficiencies that might be identified
- New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs) being too focussed on getting trainees taken on by organisations and not ensuring that workplaces and providers were taking learning seriously enough
- the effectiveness of regulating regimes at State/Territory level for registered training organisations (RTOs)

The study identified a range of different approaches to learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships. These varied along a number of continua, including:

- the mix of learning and assessment undertaken either during the course of normal work or undertaken away from work
- the degree of formality in the learning and assessment processes
- the extent to which learning and assessment were undertaken by qualified trainers, especially designated workers, or were left to those employees who happened to be working with apprentices and trainees

Various ways of organising learning included:

- approaches which combined learning in the workplace and in off-site environments geographically removed from the workplace (for example, a technical and further education [TAFE] institute or private provider)
- approaches which included learning at work and withdrawal from normal work duties to attend training at a training room or skills centre within the enterprise
- approaches which used day-to-day work as the sole site for learning

Numerous learning strategies were mentioned, but those that were interactive, treated the learners as adults and were responsive to learning needs and styles were thought to be of greatest benefit. Self-paced modules to be completed either in the learner's own time or during specified times during work (these could incorporate the use of on-line and multimedia technologies) were also used widely in both apprenticeships and traineeships. Approaches to assessment included those relying solely on summative assessment and those utilising both formative and summative assessment tasks. The off-site environment appeared to be the most common site for assessment in the case of apprentices.

Respondents did not endorse any one particular model of learning and assessment as the most beneficial but, instead, emphasised that a range of learning and assessment approaches could potentially be successful. A number of critical factors that supported or inhibited effective approaches to learning and assessment are summarised in this report.

The study found that the participating apprentices and trainees were, in general, having their learning and assessment expectations fulfilled. These expectations were more likely to be met in cases where learning and assessment occurred in a combination of workplace and off-site (external to the enterprise) experiences. The judgements of both apprentices and trainees indicated that each learning environment has its strengths and limitations.

The report provides an in-depth examination of a number of aspects in both the workplace and off-site learning environments that apprentices and trainees consider important to their learning and, critically, which of them are currently happening in those environments.

Rankings by apprentices and trainees on *workplace* aspects are somewhat different, though four aspects in particular are rated very highly by both groups:

- trainers in the workplace are effective instructors
- learners know exactly what is required of them in assessment processes
- learners have quality relationships with those in the workplace who are helping them learn
- there are opportunities to undertake meaningful work—that is, taking on more difficult and complex tasks over time

These aspects reflect some of the core components of quality learning and assessment. Two key dimensions stand out in both sets of rankings. One is the importance placed on the nature of the relationships between the learners and the people they work with and who train them. The data highlight the value placed on the quality of workplace relations. The second is the emphasis placed on the importance of time to the skill development process. Time to practise, opportunities to experience more difficult and complex work over time

and the value of having mistakes corrected by their workplace trainers are all ranked highly.

The report also highlights a number of aspects which they valued for their learning but which were not currently happening in many workplaces. The following five were reported absent in one-third to one-half of workplaces by both apprentices and trainees:

- opportunities to work on their own
- being able to be formally assessed when they are ready
- being able to attend classes and workshops that count towards their qualification
- employers/trainers taking time to talk to them about their job
- employers/trainers interested in their future in the workforce

Other aspects not present in many workplaces, and yet critical to quality learning and assessment practices, included not being given feedback and encouragement about their work performance (apprentices), no time allowed to practise skills being learnt (apprentices), not being aware of exact assessment requirements (apprentices) and lack of opportunities for competence to be formally tested while at work (trainees).

Rankings by apprentices and trainees on aspects in *off-site* environments also differ, but three aspects in particular are rated very highly by both groups:

- teachers/trainers are effective instructors
- opportunities to practise skills that are not being learnt in the workplace
- opportunities to have competence formally tested

As in the case of the workplace environment, both apprentices and trainees highlighted the importance of having effective teaching/training. Practice and assessment were also seen to be crucial elements in their notion of a quality learning system.

Both apprentices and especially trainees reported that the aspects they considered important for their learning were in fact happening in their off-site environments. Only three aspects in the case of the apprentices, and none for the trainees, were reported as absent from around a third of their providers. These included: opportunities for formal assessment when they were ready, opportunities to talk to teachers/trainers about what they would like to learn, and teachers/trainers being aware and up to date with what is happening in the workplace. This last aspect is a critical factor given the very high level of importance given to it by the learners.

Cross-tabulations were also carried out on these aspects by type of contract of training—whether 'workplace-only' or 'integrated' (none in the survey sample were totally on the job without any withdrawal to an enterprise training room or off-site provider). For both apprentices and trainees, there were a small number of significantly different aspects rated more important by those in workplace-only situations, with only one common to both types of contract—namely, trainers/employers taking time to talk to learners about their job. However, one-third of apprentices reported that they currently do not have opportunities to talk about their work with their employer/trainer.

This study shows that there is considerable diversity in the provision of learning and assessment for apprentices and trainees in Australia. This has been one of the key catchwords throughout much of the recent reform within the VET sector. Such diversity has promoted the development of innovative approaches to structured training that have delivered significant benefits to employers, apprentices and trainees.

However, not all RTOs and enterprises have been able to handle the complexities and challenges offered to them. This study has shown that all workplaces and off-site environments are not equal in terms of the quality of learning and assessment they provide. There are inherent tensions between the needs of enterprises and the needs of apprentices and trainees.

Achieving quality learning and assessment systems for apprentices and trainees appears to revolve around two foci. One is the constant monitoring of the *balance* between the competing tensions inherent in employment-based, structured training arrangements—namely, needs of the enterprise and needs of the apprentices and trainees. The second is the developing and sustaining of effective *partnerships* between apprentice/trainee, employer and training provider.

Maintaining a fair balance would appear to involve significant efforts on the part of employers, trainers and other key stakeholders. A learning culture to support the development of apprentices and trainees cannot be imposed on an enterprise. However, work practices and relationships that can potentially facilitate learning need to be promoted, and the skills of employers and those in the workplace who are given responsibility to work with and support apprentices' and trainees' learning need to be developed further. Institutionally based education and training practices need to be adapted and shaped to fit with workplace learning cultures. Enterprises need to be provided with information, resources and support to assist them to build learning cultures that will provide fair and equitable attention to the needs of both learners and the enterprise. The promotion of a learning culture is especially pressing in the context of enterprises where training for apprentices and trainees does not include any opportunities for learning or assessment external to the enterprise.

The second focus for achieving quality learning for apprentices and trainees lies in the development of partnerships. Successful learning and assessment for apprentices and trainees lies in the strength and effectiveness of the partnership developed between the trainee/apprentice, the employer and the RTO. Quality partnerships build an environment where effective learning and assessment can take place. Such learning environments are characterised by apprentices and trainees participating in learning processes that may span different environments but which work in concert to ensure the development of vocational knowledge and skills that are relevant to the immediate work context. In addition, these learning experiences equip apprentices and trainees with skills and competencies to participate in ongoing learning and development.

While many apprentices and trainees are well satisfied with the learning and assessment experiences afforded them by their forms of training, significant numbers noted the absence of a range of aspects from their workplaces and training providers that they believed to be important for learning. These significant gaps require addressing. This report concludes with ten recommendations relating to the implementation of contracts of training and to the capacity-building of those in workplaces and providers who assist apprentices and trainees to learn.

Introduction

Discussion about apprenticeships and traineeships tends to be concentrated on issues to do with the institutional apparatus around apprenticeships or arguments about how access to them can be improved. For instance, *User Choice* is a topic that has received much recent attention (Noble et al. 1999; Selby Smith, Selby Smith & Ferrier 1996). Little attention, however, has been given to what actually happens to apprentices and how they learn their skills. The classic study in this area is Venables (1967), and more recent Australian studies include Wilson and Engelhard (1994), Smith (1998), and Harris et al. (1998). Similarly, traineeships have, until recently, received little attention (Schofield 1999a, 1999b, 2000). Issues relating to learning and assessment go to the very heart of the quality of vocational education and training (VET) for apprentices and trainees, as well as the ability of the system to deliver outcomes related to promoting lifelong learning and the provision of valid pathways into the workforce.

A common thread in apprenticeships and traineeships is the combination of off- and on-the-job learning. Empirical research (for example, Harris et al. 1998) indicates that both sites assist apprentices in their learning in different ways. A number of factors contribute to the effectiveness of on-the-job learning experiences, such as work organisation, size of company, commitment to a training culture and the employer's normative commitment to his or her occupation (Smith 1998). Off-the-job learning, in contrast, provides opportunities for greater detail in the learning process, more time to think, opportunities for revision and integration of previous learning, opportunities for collaborative learning and time to build confidence and theoretical knowledge (Harris et al. 1998, p.151). These advantages may not all be present when the off-the-job component is delivered flexibly.

In recent years, many trainees have been receiving the off-the-job component of their traineeships on-the-job either solely through the performance of work duties or through training provided at the workplace (Schofield 2000, pp.60–61). While recent reports (for example, Schofield 1999a, 1999b, 2000) have exposed irregularities in some totally on-the-job traineeships, not so much attention has been focussed on the learning challenges which totally on-the-job traineeships and apprenticeships may pose. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some apprentices' on-the-job training may be very poor, and this raises doubts about the efficacy of totally on-the-job apprenticeships. Some recent research (Murphy et al. 1998) suggests that while apprentice training may be carried out effectively within the workplace (and not at a VET provider), a component needs to be off the job (for example, in an apprentice training school) not on the job whilst working. These issues all need to be examined systematically.

Closely aligned with the question of quality of learning experiences is the issue of assessment. Traditionally, only the off-the-job component of apprenticeships and traineeships has been formally assessed, with the on-the-job component being completed on a time-served basis. Sometimes there is a requirement for on-the-job assessment as well, but it is unclear how much this is enforced (Griffin et al. 1998). There are a variety of mechanisms used in assessment, including the use of workbooks and on-site visits by training providers and, where applicable, group training scheme representatives. A range of factors impact on the quality of assessment, including the relationship between on- and off-the-job assessment (Hager 1998), mechanisms used in assessment (for example, Gillis et

al. 1998; Hayton & Wagner 1998; Bloch 1998) and the connection between assessment and learning (McDonald et al. 1997).

A further issue for examination is the different types of learning which apprentices and trainees experience. As well as skills, learning may incorporate key competencies and other work-related skills. This is of particular importance for young people where the apprenticeship or traineeship is their first experience in the paid workforce. It is possible that these 'extra' components of learning may be overlooked where young people are learning with a large number of mature people—for instance, in large-scale on-the-job food industry traineeships. However, young people are less likely in modern times to come to apprenticeships and traineeships devoid of previous working experience, yet those responsible for training apprentices and trainees often assume that the young people have no prior knowledge.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the learning and assessment experiences of apprentices and trainees in order to identify areas that pose particular challenges and to make recommendations about approaches to best practice.

The specific objectives for the study were to:

- identify what different stakeholders in apprenticeships and traineeships expect apprentices and trainees to learn as part of their contracts of training
- identify and analyse the different approaches to learning and assessment that can be undertaken by apprentices and trainees as part of their contracts of training
- evaluate the extent to which these different approaches to learning and assessment contribute to the learning goals and needs of apprentices/trainees
- evaluate areas where improvements might be made to learning and assessment practices and the strategies and interventions that are required to bring about change

Research questions

The research questions addressed in this study were:

a) Expectations of learning from apprenticeships and traineeships

- What do the different stakeholders in apprenticeships and traineeships (employers, industry bodies, apprentices, trainees, VET teachers and trainers) expect apprentices and trainees to learn during their contract of training?
- How might these expectations impact on the approaches to learning and assessment experienced by apprentices and trainees?

b) Different modes of learning and assessment

- What different approaches to learning and assessment can be identified for apprentices/trainees, including varying modes of delivery, both on and off the job?
- How do these approaches to learning and assessment vary across a number of situations, including industry, occupations, geographical location, type of contract of training, qualification level?

c) Quality of the learning and assessment approaches

From the perspective of apprentices and trainees:

- What different approaches to learning and assessment have they experienced during their contract of training?

- Which approaches to assessment and learning contribute most and which least to their learning goals?
- What factors contribute to the success of particular approaches to assessment and learning?

From the perspective of various other stakeholders (VET teachers and trainers, employers, group training scheme personnel, human resource managers):

- What approaches to assessment and learning appear to be most successful?
- What contributes to the success of these approaches (for example, contextual factors, personnel)?
- What barriers exist that inhibit the use of these approaches to learning and assessment?

d) Implications of the research

- How might the successful approaches to learning and assessment be implemented in other occupations/industry areas?
- What strategies and interventions could be implemented to bring about changes to approaches to learning and assessment?
- What are the implications of the findings of this study for policy-makers, trainees, apprentices, employers, registered training organisations (RTOs) and group training schemes?

Research methods

Data collection for this study was undertaken in three stages. The first stage comprised focus groups conducted with key stakeholders (State training authority representatives, Industry Training Advisory Boards (ITABs)/industry representatives, VET curriculum staff, teachers and trainers) in every State and Territory. The primary purpose of these groups was to establish the key issues in relation to expectations about the nature of the learning that should be promoted in apprenticeships and traineeships. They also examined the impact of these expectations on approaches to learning and assessment (see appendix A for the focus groups protocol). Table 1 sets out the location of the focus groups together with numbers of participants in each group.

The focus groups were also asked about potential case study sites for the second stage of the study.

The second stage involved case studies at 20 selected sites. Each site visit was undertaken over two days. Data were collected from a range of personnel (as applicable to each site), including apprentices and trainees, VET teachers and trainers, training co-ordinators, human resource managers/supervisors, group training scheme personnel and host employers (see appendix B for the case study protocols).

Table 1: Location and number of participants in focus groups

Location	Number of participants
Australian Capital Territory	6
New South Wales	5
Northern Territory	9
Queensland	10
South Australia	13
Tasmania	9
Victoria	8
Western Australia	6
Total	**66**

A range of factors was taken into account when selecting the case study sites (see appendix C for the case study profiles). These factors included:

1. Site of learning
- ❖ completely on-the-job contracts of training
- ❖ learning in the workplace but including withdrawal from routine work for some learning
- ❖ a mix of on- and off-the-job learning

2. Breadth of learning
- ❖ a range of qualification levels and lengths of contracts of training

3. Mode of learning
- ❖ traineeships and apprenticeships
- ❖ school-based traineeships and apprenticeships
- ❖ variety of providers including workplaces, group training companies (GTCs), public and private RTOs

4. Mode of assessment
- ❖ assessment entirely in the workplace
- ❖ a combination of on- and off-the-job assessment

5. Industry
- ❖ a variety of industries including 'traditional' trade areas (automotive, building and construction) and new industries (information technology)

6. Location
- ❖ regional sites and metropolitan-based sites
- ❖ representative of States and Territories (except Western Australia)

While several totally on-the-job case study sites were suggested, closer investigation revealed that all involved some learning taking place at the workplace but structured separately from the flow of routine work—that is, a specific session either in a training room or a situation separate from the routine work of the job. While in some case study sites this was of relatively short duration, it is nonetheless more accurate to describe these case studies as 'on the job (including withdrawal from routine work)'. These case studies did not involve learning at any site other than the learner's workplace.

The matrix in figure 1 details the 20 case study sites, illustrating their spread across these factors.

The third stage, undertaken concurrently with the case studies, comprised a national survey of apprentices and trainees in two occupations. The two occupations selected were motor mechanics (ASCO code 4211) and hospitality workers (ASCO code 632). This survey was conducted with the support of each State and Territory training authority who undertook to mail out a questionnaire to one-quarter of apprentices and trainees in these two occupations (see appendix D for the survey questionnaire). The sample was stratified according to the numbers in training in each State/Territory as at 30 June 1999. The breakdown of the total numbers and intended sample is presented in table 2.

Figure 1: The selected case studies by site of learning, breadth of learning, mode of learning, mode of assessment, industry and location

SITE	LEARNING											ASSESSMENT				INDUSTRY										LOCATION		
	1. Site of learning			2. Breadth of learning		3. Mode of learning						4. Mode of assessment																
		On the job (including withdrawal from routine work)	Mix of on and off the job	Qualification level(s)	Duration (year of apprentice/ trainee)	Apprentice	Trainee	School-based	Group training company	Private provider	TAFE	Workplace	External	Combination – workplace/external	TAFE	Automotive	Community services & health	Construction	Finance	Education	IT & telecommunication	Manufacturing & engineering	Property services	Rural/fisheries/ forestry	Wholesale/retail	Capital city	Regional location	State/Territory
Site 1			✔	Cert 3	1–4	✔			✔		✔		✔		✔			✔								✔		NSW
Site 2			✔	Cert 3	1–4	✔					✔	✔		✔								✔				✔		NSW
Site 3			✔	Cert 2	1–4	✔					✔			✔											✔	✔		NSW
Site 4		✔		Cert 3	1		✔					✔										✔					✔	Vic.
Site 5			✔	Cert 3	1	✔			✔		✔			✔			✔								✔		Vic.
Site 6			✔	Cert 3	1		✔				✔			✔		✔									✔		Vic.
Site 7			✔	Cert 2	1	✔			✔					✔		✔									✔		Vic.
Site 8			✔	Cert 2	1	✔		✔			✔			✔					✔						✔		Vic.
Site 9			✔	Cert 2 & 3	1–2		✔																	✔		✔		Vic.
Site 10		✔	✔	Cert 2	1		✔				✔			✔											✔			Vic.
Site 11			✔	Cert 2	1		✔			✔				✔									✔			✔	✔	Qld.
Site 12			✔	Cert 2	2	✔		✔	✔					✔											✔	✔		Qld.
Site 13			✔	Cert 3	1–4	✔				✔				✔								✔				✔		SA
Site 14		✔		Cert 3	1–4	✔				✔				✔								✔				✔		SA
Site 15			✔	Cert 1–3	1–3		✔			✔				✔										✔			✔	SA
Site 16			✔	Cert 2	1		✔			✔				✔							✔					✔		SA
Site 17		✔		Cert 2	2		✔				✔	✔									✔						✔	Tas.
Site 18			✔	Cert 2	1		✔			✔				✔										✔		✔		Tas.
Site 19				Cert 3	1–4	✔					✔		✔		✔							✔					✔	ACT
Site 20				Cert 3	2		✔				✔			✔						✔							✔	NT

Table 2: Numbers of apprentices and trainees in the two selected occupations by State/Territory—total numbers and intended sample

State/ Territory	Numbers of hospitality workers		Numbers of motor mechanics		Totals		
	Total in each State/ Territory	Intended sample	Total in each State/ Territory	Intended sample	Total in each State/ Territory	Total in surveyed sample	
						n	%
N	1 856	464	5 650	1 412	7 506	1 876	33.6
Vic.	2 161	540	3 971	993	6 132	1 533	27.4
Qld.	3 185	796	2 641	660	5 826	1 456	26.1
WA	205	51	139	35	344	86	1.5
SA	247	62	1 043	261	1 290	323	5.8
Tas.	459	115	233	58	692	173	3.1
ACT	69	17	229	57	298	74	1.3
NT	44	11	185	46	229	57	1.0
Totals	**8 226**	**2 056**	**14 091**	**3 522**	**22 317**	**5 578**	**100.0**

A total of 5578 questionnaires were mailed out to apprentices and trainees in the automotive and hospitality fields of employment. Of these, 387 questionnaires were 'returned to sender' or 'address unknown', suggesting that the usability of the addresses in the sample database was not optimal. The number of useable questionnaires returned by the due date was 607. Of those, 12 respondents did not identify themselves as either apprentices or trainees and so their questionnaires were not included in the final analysis. The analysis in this report therefore is based on 595 apprentices and trainees, giving a response rate of 10.6%.

The low return rate for this study is not unexpected and can be explained, in part, by a number of factors. First, during the course of the study the researchers received information that highlighted the difficulties inherent in maintaining up-to-date databases. Telephone feedback was received from two recipients of the questionnaire who had completed their apprenticeships eight and 13 years ago respectively. Second, the high number of questionnaires returned to the researchers because they were undeliverable underscores the highly mobile nature of the target population.

A third constraint that contributed to the response rate was the method used to distribute the questionnaires. To maintain confidentiality of potential respondents, the researchers were naturally not permitted direct access to names and addresses of apprentices and trainees. State/Territory training authorities distributed the questionnaires on the researchers' behalf and respondents were asked to return their completed questionnaires directly to the researchers. With this process, reminders and follow-up of non-respondents were not possible. Despite these limitations, this return has still provided a substantial amount of data to inform the research questions that are the focus of this study.

Context of the study

Entry-level training policies are directed at providing training for people entering the workforce and promoting achievement of qualifications up to and including Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level 4 (Lundberg 1997, p.3). Apprenticeships and traineeships are a key component of government policies aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of entry-level training and have been the focus of considerable change and debate during the implementation of training reform over the last ten years. Issues relating to participation rates, industrial relations and wages policies have all received significant attention during the reform period (Australian Education Council Review Committee 1991; DEET 1991; Sweet 1995; Kemp 1996; Lundberg 1997). However, issues relating to learning and assessment within apprenticeships and traineeships have not received the same degree of attention. This chapter of the report sets the scene for this study by analysing available literature on these issues.

Purposes and key features of apprenticeships and traineeships

Apprenticeships and traineeships serve two underlying policy objectives relating to entry into the labour market generally and, more specifically, into an occupation. Both are based on a contractual relationship and the formation and maintenance of social relationships between the individual apprentice or trainee and employer for the duration of the contract of training. As a contractual relationship, apprenticeships and traineeships provide both parties with specific benefits. For apprentices and trainees, the contract of training provides a guaranteed period of employment, during which there is the opportunity to learn a range of skills relating to an occupation. There are also opportunities to learn about being a 'worker' and what it means to maintain one's position in the workplace. For employers, the contract of training provides the opportunity to be involved in the skill formation process for their particular industry and the potential benefits of increased productivity from the apprentice or trainee over time.

One of the key differences between apprenticeships and traineeships is the emphasis placed on skill formation. Within apprenticeships there is an expectation of a 'skill formation process', whereas traineeships are often seen as primarily providing employment pathways (WADOT 1998, p.v). Traineeships are often viewed as having a 'lower' status than apprenticeships with a higher concentration of effort in providing a pathway into the world of work (Ray 2001). These differences are a product of their differing histories and the policies that have been implemented at both State and federal levels to support their implementation (WADOT 1998, p.45).

The advent of the *New Apprenticeships* reforms has resulted in the merging of apprenticeships and traineeships under a unified framework. This process is by no means complete and, although administratively no distinction is made between apprentices and trainees, the two terms are still used quite extensively in practice to refer to what is perceived to be quite different skill development processes. Other recent policy initiatives, including *User Choice*, have resulted in an increased range of occupations embraced particularly by traineeships. Potentially, the ways in which on- and off-the-job training can

be combined and the level of qualifications linked to completion of contracts of training have also diversified.

Apprentices and trainees, therefore, may be exposed to diverse, and sometimes multiple, learning environments during the course of their contract of training. Each environment has the potential to help or hinder the learning process and offers the potential for a range of opportunities for this learning to be assessed in a variety of ways. As noted above, however, some writers see key differences between apprenticeships and traineeships, so, in an attempt to acknowledge these differences, this review reports (where possible) the literature on apprenticeships and traineeships under separate sections.

The workplace as a site for learning

The workplace is a primary learning site for both apprentices and trainees. It is the site where, either solely or in conjunction with an off-site provider, apprentices and trainees are able to undertake a range of activities which will result in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attributes as part of an accredited award (Candy & Matthews 1998, p.14). It is the primary site of learning because it is the place where apprentices and trainees spend most (and in some cases, all) of their time. In the workplace, learning and work can occur simultaneously—that is, it is learning *through* work as well as learning *at* work (Seagraves & Osborne 1997). In the latter instance, apprentices and trainees may be withdrawn from the normal work processes to participate in a range of activities, one of the most common of which is coaching (Smith 1998). Other processes such as observation, attending on-site learning events and workshops, job rotation and discussion with colleagues are also used to facilitate learning.

The extent and structure of the workplace learning undertaken by apprentices and trainees is shaped by a range of factors, including:

- the size of the enterprise in which they are employed (Smith et al. 1995)
- the nature of the work undertaken in the enterprise, which in turn shapes the skill formation processes which best match these work requirements (Field 1997; Baker & Wooden 1995)
- the links that exist between the enterprise and the formal VET sector (Guthrie & Barnett 1996)
- the degree to which the specialisation of the enterprise coincides with an area of VET provision (Billett & Cooper 1997, p.12)

The workplace, however, cannot be assumed to be an 'ideal' learning environment. In general, it is accepted that on-the-job learning aids transfer (Smith 1998) and is more 'authentic' (Billett 1994). However, the on-the-job environment also has some significant disadvantages for learning. In many instances the goals, methods, ideals and strategies of business enterprises are very different from those of learning institutions. The former is concerned with productivity and survival, the latter with learning and professional growth. Thus an enterprise (especially a small business) is not primarily concerned with learning and, in particular, the sort of learning that might lead to qualifications (Harris, Simons & Bone 2000).

Billett (1996) notes that some employees might be required to work in isolation and have no one to learn from; or that experts may not be available or sufficiently skilled in teaching or willing to teach learners. Some working environments (because of noise, for example) are not practicable for teaching purposes. Evans (1993) notes that access to a range of suitable activities can be problematic:

> *In authentic work contexts, the goals of the organisation are to produce goods or service to a standard which will ensure its viability. Such motives must inevitably constrain resources for teaching and learning activities and impose restraints on novices' activities to prevent costly mistakes.* (Evans 1993, p.8)

Billett (1996, p.12) suggests that in order for on-the-job learning to be effective, the arrangements need to be examined for the following factors:

- access to authentic arrangements
- access to experts
- mentoring and feedback from experts
- access to a range of activities which reveal both the process and the product of occupational activities
- activities sequenced in a manner which aids understanding
- task structures that are explicit

Learning from only one work situation—and often from one senior worker—may mean that there is one way of working being learned and that the ability to question and critique is not developed. Further, workplaces may not be up to date in either their equipment or practices; and few encourage workers to learn for the future rather than the present. Employees can be taught bad habits and practices as well as good (Harris et al. 1998). Workplaces are often repressive and inequitable, so that access to training (off the job or on the job) may be restricted to one gender only or to certain ethnic groups (Butler 1996). Finally, most workplaces need to put production before training and so, while intentions may be good, training generally suffers when production pressures are great (Brooker & Butler 1997; Smith 1998).

In overseas literature, network learning theory (Van der Krogt 1998; Poell, Van der Krogt & Wildereersch 1998) highlights the importance of work and learning networks that operate within enterprises and the potential they have for shaping the learning that might occur in them. Within any enterprise, the overriding concern is 'to get the work done' (Harris & Simons 2000). The work network predominates, sometimes at the expense of the learning that might take place. The learning network that might be created in an enterprise is created by the actions of workers (including apprentices and trainees) in conjunction with those designated with training responsibilities. Sometimes, in the case of large enterprises, the learning networks are created with the support of human resource departments with considerable resources and training infrastructure. In smaller enterprises, the actions of workers create, support and maintain spaces in which learning and monitoring (even assessment) can take place. In the case of apprenticeships and traineeships, there is also the potential for considerable influence from external agents in the form of RTOs which, optimally, work with existing learning networks within enterprises to support the learning of apprentices and trainees.

Apprentices learning in the workplace

Potentially, the workplace can offer apprentices a 'rich', if not sometimes problematic, learning environment. In a study of housing apprentices, Harris et al. (1998, p.151) found that the on-site learning environment makes a valuable contribution to the development of apprentices as tradespeople and workers and the study explored in detail the nature of that contribution. The on-site learning environment offers:

- a real world environment where task management and contingency management skills are integrated into the learning process (that is, certain types of knowledge, in particular procedural (how to do it) and strategic (when to do what) knowledge) can be well developed in workplaces, but the development of declarative knowledge (knowledge of how things work) is sometimes more problematic (Billett 1993; Gott 1989)
- work experience which supports the development of skills to the point of routine (Evans 1993)

- learning relationships that are usually one-to-one or built around small groups of workers. These arrangements can promote opportunities for the apprentice or trainee to become 'immersed' in the learning/work process (Billett 1994). If constructive, these personal relationships can result in interactions with their senior or more-experienced colleagues where the meanings of apprentices' and trainees' actions and understandings can be made explicit through a range of interpersonal processes, including discussion, questioning and challenging of ways of working (Harris, Simons & Bone 2000). This is essential if the learning process is to move beyond mere participation (Welton 1991, p.31; Watkins 1991, p.30; Hawke 1995, p.6). This process is, of course, highly dependent not only on the skills and attributes of those acting in the role of workplace trainers, but also on the differing dispositions of the apprentice/trainee
- opportunities for the development of apprentices' and trainees' confidence to approach the formal components of their training, especially in relation to assessment and increasingly to become independent and critical learners

Harris et al. (1998, p.129) noted that the approaches of workplace trainers (employers) and the manner in which they interact with apprentices can hinder learning. Specifically, trainers who 'told' rather than 'showed' apprentices how to approach a task were seen as presenting a significant barrier to learning. This circumstance was exacerbated when the communication and conflict resolution skills of the trainer were also perceived to be poor. Outdated knowledge or training methods that were not consistent with previous learning undertaken by apprentices also presented difficulties. Employers' reactions to mistakes (for example, 'going off') and unrealistic expectations in relation to apprentices' current level of knowledge and skills also impacted significantly on the quality of learning.

In many respects, learning in the workplace is a complex process. In summing up the experiences of apprentices from their study, Harris et al. note:

> *At times learning appears to occur naturally, blending with the flow of work in an uncomplicated stream. At other times, the process of learning could be likened to a battle, where both apprentice and host employer become immersed in conflicts. Learning emerges from these circumstances more through good fortune than through any planned or deliberate actions from either party. There are also many times when learning just doesn't happen.* (Harris et al. 1998, p.131)

Collins, Brown & Newman (1989, pp.459–460) list a number of useful features which facilitate learning in apprenticeship-type situations:

- access by the learners to a number of expert workers who provide models of expertise
- learning with other learners to provide a sense of learning as a staged process
- making tasks for beginners authentic and meaningful
- encouraging friendly competition between learners while allowing for learners to make mistakes

Wolek (1999) has developed a model to guide learning in apprenticeships which emphasises the importance of time and practice in the development of skills and the importance of 'feel' and reflection in the development of highly skilled practitioners. It is Wolek's contention that internal knowledge (deep knowledge) that derives from practice is a 'cumulative growth in awareness and understanding of the micro-sensations of work' and that the apprentice is best placed to judge the development of this knowledge (Wolek 1999, p.24). Therefore, apprentices' ability to evaluate their own progress is critical to the process of apprenticeship.

Off-site learning environments

Learning in off-site environments offers apprentices (and potentially trainees) a set of contrasting experiences in which to learn. Figure 2, taken from a study of housing industry apprentices (Harris et al. 1998), highlights these contrasts and points to the potential that

off-site environments have in offering conflicting and complementary learning opportunities.

This study notes that off-site learning environments have the potential to offer a learning experience that emphasises detail, thinking and reflection. In particular, the following characteristics of the off-site environment are highly valued by apprentices for the contribution that they make to their learning:

- slower pace of activities
- the opportunity for the consolidation and review of skills learnt on site
- potential new insights
- the broadening of a skills base beyond what is required in one specific workplace, and
- the chance to interact with other people in similar and different circumstances

Figure 2: Differences between learning at on- and off-the-job sites

Learning on the job	Learning off the job
❖ Is perceived as more practical and meaningful	❖ Is perceived to be theoretical, more 'why' focussed
❖ Is combined with the pressure to perform within time limits and the need to work as efficiently and quickly as possible	❖ Is subject to no pressure, or at least time pressures are not as evident
❖ Provides opportunities to see what actually happens and how it 'fits' together	❖ Allows more time to think and more opportunities to ask questions
❖ Can be hindered by a lack of incentives to facilitate learning which costs the employer both time and money	❖ Focusses on explanations, illustrations rather than concrete experience
❖ Comes from a close interaction with other employees/employers/mentors 'passing on' what they know	❖ Is more detailed and usually at a slower pace
❖ Requires that the apprentices be able to improvise and use their own judgement because the environment can be unpredictable (this includes both the physical and social environment)	❖ Is formal and predictable to a greater extent
❖ Can result in learning 'lots of different ways' but not necessarily the 'correct' way	❖ Takes place in a more 'perfect' environment which often emphasises safety
❖ Is motivating because apprentices usually have concrete results which 'show' for their learning	❖ Promotes 'learning by the book' where there are opportunities to pick up on the details that might have been missed on site
❖ Often provides opportunities to be exposed to the latest methods, equipment etc.	❖ Provides alternative opportunities for apprentices to meet other people
❖ Is often more individualised and involves learning from mistakes	❖ Is more group orientated and collaborative
❖ Is usually directly applicable to the task at hand	❖ Can often be more 'future' oriented

Source: Harris et al. 1998, p.146.

Another contribution of the off-site learning environment is the opportunity to make 'uncommon commonsense' transparent and visible. It enables apprentices to move beyond the surface, easily observable components of the skills they are learning on site. It enables them to develop a richer and potentially more transferable skill base (Harris et al. 1998, p.144).

In many respects the on- and off-the-job learning environments are complementary and would appear, at first glance, to make complementary contributions to the development of competent workers. This assumption has long supported arrangements that have emphasised an integrated approach to training where the skill development process is shared between the employer(s) and the training provider(s) (Cooney 1993).

Learning in *New Apprenticeships*

A number of State-based studies have explored the issue of the quality of learning and assessment within the context of the *New Apprenticeships* policy framework. These provide a valuable backdrop to the current study.

A study of *New Apprenticeships* in Western Australia identified the importance of a number of training-delivery-related factors for apprentices and trainees (WADOT 1998). Although this study did not provide data that distinguish between trainees and apprentices, the rating of factors is nonetheless illustrative of the factors that are valued and supportive of achieving successful outcomes for apprentices and trainees. Table 3 sets out the success factors identified in focus groups with apprentices/trainees and their ratings in terms of importance and satisfaction. A seven-point scale was used to determine the ratings.

Table 3: Factors that contribute to successful outcomes for apprentices and trainees: Importance and satisfaction

Success factors	Rating of importance	Rating of satisfaction
The off-the-job training provider is up to date with industry trends	6.8	5.1
The off-the-job training provider explains the content of training to employer and apprentice	6.4	4.7
The training provider is able to modify training content to suit company needs	5.9	4.4
The training provider assesses the generic competencies (maths, literacy) of the apprentice or trainee at the commencement of the training period	5.9	4.4
Availability of graded assessment	5.6	3.2
Flexible entry and exit	5.6	4.2
Able to negotiate times for training off the job	5.4	3.6
There is a choice of training providers	5.3	3.1
Availability of self-paced modules	5.3	3.7
There are options for assessment in the workplace by an independent person	5.2	3.6
The apprentice has customer service training early in the training period	4.9	3.4
Option for all training to be undertaken on the job	4.3	2.8

Source: WADOT 1998, p.40.

These data provide some clues to the characteristics of training delivery that potentially could support apprentices and trainees in their learning and assessment. This study also noted the off-the-job training was considered to be an important contributor to the success of an apprenticeship (it was not clear whether this observation focussed specifically on apprenticeships or was inclusive of traineeships).

The Western Australian Department of Training (WADOT 1998, p.41) points out that off-site training was valued because it provided apprentices with opportunities to:

- share and solve problems
- gain individual support and information
- share concerns and issues with fellow students

The author of this report concludes that:

> *the off-job component fulfills an important support and information function regardless of the course content. This raises a question about support and information mechanisms within the rapidly growing 100% on-the-job packages.* (WADOT 1998, p.41)

A study undertaken in relation to Queensland's traineeship system (Schofield 1999a) raises serious issues with regard to the quality of learning that is resulting from totally on-the-job traineeships. A survey of employers and trainees commissioned as part of an independent investigation into the traineeship system revealed that 19% of all trainees reported they were receiving no training from their RTO. Over one-third (39%) of trainees and employers indicated that training plans were not used to determine progress during the period of the contract of training (Schofield 1999a, p.43). More significantly, this report raised concerns about the ability of totally on-the-job training to deliver experiences which are commensurate with what is required of a qualification at AQF 3 level and above:

> *At these levels it is most unlikely that the broad range of competencies, transferable skills and underpinning knowledge could be acquired and assessed properly without the substantial involvement of an RTO and the withdrawal of the trainee from daily work processes.*
>
> (Schofield 1999a, p.44)

Smith (1999) raised similar concerns in a study examining the impact of *User Choice* on the Queensland training market. He notes that whilst the standard of training delivered by many providers is very good, there are significant concerns about the deterioration of the quality of training for totally on-the-job traineeships (Smith 1999, p.23). Poor quality learning resources that are over-reliant on trainees' ability 'to learn for themselves from the booklets they are given' (Smith 1999, p.24) and which minimise direct teaching support were also seen to undermine severely the quality of learning experiences for trainees. A number of problems with employer support for on-the-job training were also noted. These included:

- lack of resources needed for the training program
- inadequate delivery of the training employers are claiming that they provide
- the perception that employers do not have the teaching/training skills needed to support fully on-the-job contracts of training (Smith 1999, p.30)

A review of Tasmania's traineeship system noted its 'average' level of quality (Schofield 1999b, p.3). Drawing on data collected by the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia's survey of stakeholders implementing *User Choice* (Kilpatrick & Guenther 1999), Schofield (1999b, pp.3–4) notes the following:

- employers and trainees reported high levels of satisfaction with the content, timing and location of training programs
- 17% of employers expressed dissatisfaction with the method of training delivery
- trainees expressed some dissatisfaction with the way that assessment was conducted. Trainees working with private RTOs expressed greater levels of dissatisfaction with assessment than did those working with technical and further education (TAFE)
- there were some problems noted with the quality of learning materials and resources
- employers were less satisfied with the relevance of the training program to their organisations than their trainees. Trainees with private RTOs expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction with the relevance of their program than trainees with TAFE

In a review of Victoria's apprenticeship and traineeship system Schofield draws attention to the quality of workplaces as learning sites and the potential differences that can exist between workplaces and their capacity to support and, in some cases, deliver quality training (Schofield 2000, p.4). Other significant findings from this review (Schofield 2000, pp.48–50) include:

- nearly one-half of trainees and one-third of apprentices surveyed believed they could have commenced their training at a higher level
- 20% of trainees believed that their training was not resulting in them learning new skills

- while 86% of apprentices believed that their training had the right balance between on- and off-the-job learning, only 66% of trainees held this view. More significantly, 65% of respondents whose training was fully on the job thought their training was balanced

The Victorian review also highlighted inadequacies in the use of training plans during the contract of training and the important role that positive attitudes to training by employers and access to relevant work tasks play in providing quality on-the-job learning experiences for apprentices and trainees. The need for considerable improvement in the quality of off-the-job training was noted with apprentices and trainees suggesting that the learning in these environments was neither challenging nor motivating (Schofield 2000, pp.57–58).

All of these State-based studies note that their training systems have some excellent examples of best practice and that the systems are generally delivering the outcomes desired by employers, apprentices and trainees. However, they also point to some of the key drivers which promote quality learning and assessment in *New Apprenticeships*. They underscore:

- the critical issue of programs of learning and assessment being sufficiently rigorous to deliver the training outcomes that *industry* requires rather than concentrating on the more immediate training needs of the enterprise in which the trainee/apprentice is located (Schofield 1999a, p.44)
- the delicate balancing act that needs to be undertaken to ensure that both employer and trainee/apprentice learning needs are met

Integrated models of training for apprentices and trainees

Much of the literature on integrated training adopts an institutional perspective, emphasising the importance of co-ordination between on- and off-site providers, the negotiation of what is to be taught where and the relative roles and responsibilities of the involved parties (Gordon 1976; Sefton 1993; Lepani & Currie 1993; Jeffrey 1993). Harris et al. (1998) suggest that the process of integration is an intensely personal and continuous concern of apprentices, and offer an alternative interpretation of the concept of 'integration'. Rather than seeing integrated training as a product of systems interacting in order to promote learning, the *process* of integrating learning is emphasised. This process involves the apprentice in an active engagement with the ideas and experiences from both the on- and off-site learning environments. Integrating learning from various sites involves apprentices and trainees in the continual (re)-evaluation of their work habits and knowledge base. The integration of on- and off-the-job learning is most likely to occur:

- only after the passage of time and with apprentices and trainees having the space to think
- at different moments and under different circumstances, often with the assistance of serendipity
- in conjunction with both good and bad experiences which are all recognised as learning experiences *per se*

As apprentices and trainees acquire more knowledge and skills they must also acquire the ability to sift, discern, evaluate and ultimately synthesise their experiences into a 'way of knowing' which develops them into tradespeople and workers. Institutional and workplace learning environments, when appropriately managed, foster and support this process (Harris et al. 1998, p.189).

Assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships

The use of competency standards lies at the heart of assessment processes in apprenticeships and traineeships. The process of assessment essentially aims to determine an individual's status in relation to these standards through a variety of processes which

enable an inference of competence to be made. Approaches to assessment which equate task performance with competence (that is, competence is observable) are not in keeping with the former National Training Board's (1992, cited in Griffin & Gillis 1997, p.6) requirement that, in order to demonstrate competency, an individual needs to:

- perform individual tasks
- manage a number of different tasks with a job
- respond to irregularities and breakdowns in routine
- deal with the responsibilities and expectations of the work environment

Assessment within apprenticeships and traineeships is most often thought of as a process that occurs at the end of learning, associated with formal learning environments and the development of tools to assist in the assessment process (Hawke 1995, p.10). In reality, however, assessment is a key component of a number of workplace processes and, as such, can play a vital role in supporting learning in the workplace (Spicer 1992; Rumsey 1993; Lloyd 1993). When examining apprentices' learning, Harris et al. (1998) noted that employers were quite active in monitoring apprentices' work and providing feedback to the learners on their performance. This was sometimes an overt process that involved the apprentice taking an active part in assessing their work. In other instances, it was a covert process and could take the guise of a problem that is presented to the apprentice to solve. These 'informal' assessment processes could also be extended to include the use of self-assessment where apprentices are encouraged to monitor and evaluate their performance. This process was seen to be integral to their development 'as a tradesperson' (Harris et al. 1998, p.127).

Workplace assessment presents particular challenges in terms of quality of workplace assessors (Bloch 1996), cost-effectiveness (ANTA 1996), potential for safety risks (Griffin & Griffin 1995) and difficulties involved when assessment is carried out by supervisors (Bloch 1996). Best practice examples in the assessment of competence in the workplace have emphasised the assessment of knowledge within the context of an actual work task, rather than assuming that component parts of a job or alternative performance and knowledge can be assessed separately and then aggregated to provide an 'overall' measure of competence (Hawke & Oliver 1992). Such an holistic approach to assessment is endorsed by a number of authors (Bloch & Thompson 1994; Hager, Athanasou & Gonczi 1994). Implementation of integrated approaches to assessment pose a number of issues, usually because the practice is notably absent (Lundberg 1997, p.12) and relies on the development of meaningful partnerships based on shared responsibility for assessment between enterprises and training providers (Lepani & Currie 1993; Hawke 1995, p.17).

The relationship between assessment in the classroom and the workplace is a key issue in apprenticeships and traineeships, particularly where integrated models of training have been adopted. Most of the literature suggests that classroom assessment practices have often been translated in their entirety into the workplace, with little consideration of the impact on both the processes of learning and the resultant outcomes of the assessment process (Bloch 1996; Misko & Guthrie 1996; Millan 1996). Ballenden (1993, p.3), writing about assessment within the context of the clerical–administrative workforce, asserts that a work-based assessment strategy needs to meet the following criteria:

- flexibility: assessment should be able to be undertaken in either on- or off-the-job sites and there should be 'parity of esteem between assessments no matter where they occur'
- simplicity: there should be a 'rigorous' focus on the purpose of assessment with an emphasis on selecting the simplest method for meeting that purpose
- value adding: assessment in the workplace is not an end in itself—assessment processes need to be viewed as valuable and adding value to work processes
- fair: assessment practices need to be equitable for all involved

Docking (1998), in a review of publications on workplace assessment, notes that there are many debates about the differences or similarities between workplace assessment and

classroom assessment. Before Training Packages were introduced, developments in competency-based training had generally come to accept that providers should test learning outcomes rather than assess directly against competency standards, and that passing a course with an off-site provider did not necessarily imply workplace competence (Smith & Keating 1997, p.160; Thompson, Mathers & Quirk 1996, p.7). This once again can result in reinforcing the knowledge/skill dichotomy which does not offer much in the way of promoting the outcomes required from apprenticeships and traineeships in terms of the breadth and depth of learning. However, the advent of Training Packages has restored the original competency-based focus on the pre-eminence of workplace assessment and of competency standards and should result in new approaches to assessment that are particularly suited to the many environments in which training for work may take place. Research evidence suggests that many trainers and assessors are simply transferring assessment methods and approaches used in institution-based training settings into the workplace (Smith 2000, p.22).

In a recent study of assessment practices in Queensland, Smith (2000, pp.iv–v) concluded that quality of assessment depends on a range of factors, including:

- capacity and commitment of employers to be involved in assessment
- expectations that employers hold with regard to assessment
- expertise and commitment of RTOs and training staff to quality assessment practices
- the degree to which assessors are aware of and support students, particularly those who have difficulties with learning and assessment

This study noted evidence suggesting that current assessment practices:

- are often overly reliant on summative assessment
- make little use of formative assessment
- place greater importance on collecting large amounts of evidence without due consideration being paid to the quality of that evidence

The implementation of Training Packages was also associated with a perceived decline in the quality of training and assessment. Providers were critical of Training Packages, suggesting that they do not give enough guidance on how to plan and structure training. This, in turn, led to some trainers using them as curriculum, resulting in practices where they 'teach nothing more or less than what is needed to meet the assessment requirements in the Training Package' (Smith 2000, p.15).

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) has been a feature of training reform for over a decade (Smith & Keating 1997; Wilson & Lilly 1996; Davis 1990) and, as an assessment practice, is likely to gain ground with the advent of Training Packages. The limited amount of empirical research that has been carried out suggests that RPL has not been enthusiastically taken up by VET students for a variety of reasons, which include the often lengthy process of documentation of competence (Smith 2000, p.13). Research by Smith et al. (1997) suggests that VET providers often ask students to carry out normal assessment tasks rather than seeking RPL, and while this is appropriate in terms of competency-based practices, it means that RPL is not recorded as such.

Within the context of traineeships, a study examining the Queensland traineeship system also noted that significant numbers (26%) of trainees believed they had not commenced their traineeship at the appropriate level (Schofield 1999a, p.34). This suggests that assessment of experience and prior learning at commencement of a contract of training is not receiving sufficient attention. This study also noted that assessment of literacy, numeracy and other learning needs also should be taken into account, indicating the need for a broader remit for assessment processes within traineeships than determining achievement of competencies specified in the standards.

Conclusion

The advent of *New Apprenticeships* has encouraged an increasing trend to minimise the differences between apprenticeships and traineeships, particularly at the policy and administrative levels. When considering issues relating to learning and assessment, however, this approach becomes problematic. The existing literature clearly points to important differences between apprenticeships and traineeships. Moreover, they are usually aimed at different levels within the AQF, suggesting that the skills and knowledge to be developed during these contracts of training need to be underpinned by approaches to learning and assessment that will optimally deliver the desired outcomes.

The literature also points to the potential benefits and challenges that both the workplace and institutional environments can provide to support the assessment and facilitation of learning for apprentices and trainees. Whether the model of training is totally on the job or involves some combination with off-site providers, it should provide learning environments which expose apprentices and trainees to a breadth of experience and to authentic work commensurate with the qualification level at which their contract of training is aimed. This experience should enable the apprentice and trainee to gain a view of their current and future roles and the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to fulfil current and future occupational expectations. The learning and assessment processes should support a depth of learning which does not promote the continual dichotomy between theory and practice but rather promotes:

> *a framework whereby apprentices [and trainees] have the opportunity to develop and apply their theoretical and conceptual knowledge in the work situation and to further the capacity to think critically about practice.* (Fuller & Unwin 1998, p.164)

Both the Australian and overseas literatures emphasise that learning and assessment processes need to be underpinned by quality interactions and interpersonal relationships between employers, workplace trainers, apprentices/trainees and (where applicable) staff from RTOs. These relationship networks would appear to be particularly crucial in the case of totally on-the-job apprenticeships and traineeships where the benefits and contributions of off-site learning environments are not available to the learners. The provision of quality learning resources by both employers and training providers is also an important component of these relationships.

Learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships: Stakeholder expectations and approaches

The existing literature having been explored, this chapter focusses on the expectations that key stakeholders in the apprenticeship and traineeship system hold in relation to learning and assessment. Data were collected from various sources including focus groups and case studies. Informants included employers, representatives of industry training boards, group training schemes, human resource managers, State/Territory administrators, VET teachers and trainers. They were encouraged to adopt a macro, or systems, perspective in examining issues of learning and assessment and to provide their opinions and experiences relating to:

- the purposes they perceived apprenticeships and traineeships fulfilling
- expectations they held in relation to the nature of learning and assessment that should be promoted in apprenticeships and traineeships
- impact of these expectations on approaches to learning and assessment
- different approaches to learning and assessment identified in apprenticeships and traineeships
- factors that might contribute to or inhibit the implementation of different approaches to assessment and learning

Purposes of apprenticeships and traineeships

Respondents generally reflected the current policy trend to merge apprenticeships and traineeships by often failing to enunciate any clear distinctions between apprenticeships and traineeships. Both were seen to address employment and training-related purposes and to address the immediate needs and future aspirations of both employers and employees (figure 3). However, respondents also identified essential differences in the nature of apprenticeships and traineeships.

Respondents emphasised the key role that apprenticeships play in providing a base of skilled tradespeople for a specific industry. Apprenticeships provided the opportunity to gain a formal, nationally accredited qualification which 'they can take for the rest of their lives'. The importance of developing 'competent' tradespeople was seen as a key purpose by all respondents. Apprenticeships were singled out by employers for their potential to add value to a business, especially in the fourth year of training when apprentices could work unsupervised. They facilitate processes such as succession planning and provide a basis for recruiting tradespeople when positions become available.

Traineeships were also viewed as a mechanism for developing a competent workforce within enterprises while providing an opportunity for trainees themselves to achieve a nationally recognised qualification. Some managers and employers saw the key purpose of traineeships as providing an initial integration into the world of work—that is, almost pre-vocational in purpose. This was particularly true for school-based traineeships.

Figure 3: Purposes of apprenticeships and traineeships

Apprenticeships

- Build future human resource base for industry
- Provide an extra pair of hands (especially in 4th year)
- Provide a useful assessment/probation period for employment
- Contribute to the local community
- Provide formal recognition of skills
- Lead to a formal qualification that provides a career path and can provide a pathway into higher education
- Give valuable experience for young people seeking employment
- Develop a range of skills including generic competencies
- Foster transferable skills
- Maintain the skill base and standards in an industry
- Provide opportunities for networking and exchange of ideas

Traineeships

- Provide an introduction to technical training
- Provide opportunities to move into an apprenticeship (particularly in a school setting)
- Provide future human resource base for an industry
- Provide a useful assessment/probation period for employment
- Provide an opportunity to formally recognise the skills of workers
- Provide valuable experience for young people looking for work
- Provide a mechanism for people to 'fill' gaps in previous training
- Lead to a qualification
- Contribute to the community where services might be established (e.g. in rural and remote areas)
- Develop a range of skills including generic competencies
- Foster transferable skills
- Maintain the skill base and standards in an industry
- Provide opportunities for networking and exchange of ideas

Respondents also noted the purpose of traineeships in promoting multi-skilling both for the individual and for the enterprise. Completing a traineeship could be the first step in the development of skills and capacities leading to further learning for the trainee, sometimes in the form of an apprenticeship or other formal qualifications or moving to other areas within an enterprise. Where traineeships were used with existing employees, they were seen to provide a mechanism by which existing skills could be recognised via RPL and then built upon through further training. As a result, trainees were often more confident in their own ability and better able to perform their work roles, thus contributing to the 'bottom line' of increased efficiency and effectiveness for the enterprise.

Stakeholders' expectations of apprentices' and trainees' learning and assessment

Stakeholders expected that apprentices and trainees would learn a range of work-based skills and 'people skills'. There was an emphasis on the development of a work ethic and attributes such as flexibility and the ability to learn. Some stakeholders disagreed on the extent to which the learning should focus on the development of generic skills, believing that these should be present when the apprentice or trainee commenced their contract of training. Many comments suggested that the ability to solve problems, and to work both as part of a team and autonomously, were expected outcomes from both apprentices' and trainees' learning.

Stakeholders also expected that the learning should be purposeful and relevant. The use of processes such as RPL to reduce repetition in training was cited as important, not only for the employer but also for motivating apprentices and trainees in their learning.

The degree to which multi-skilling and the development of industry-wide knowledge and skills should be learning goals was widely debated. Some stakeholders believed that, while these are legitimate learning goals for apprentices and trainees, they were not shared by all employers. Rather, they believed that some employers were interested in apprentices and trainees developing only job and enterprise-specific skills and knowledge. Similarly, there was also some discussion among stakeholders about the degree to which learning should be future orientated in order to meet career and promotion aspirations of employees. A majority of respondents saw these goals being of equal value. They put forward the view that the development of a wide and deep knowledge and skills base would provide employees with a better understanding of their tasks and a greater capacity to be innovative, creative and flexible in the workplace.

Trainees' and apprentices' learning off the job was singled out for particular attention. This learning was expected to 'legitimise' what they had learnt on the job. Off-the-job training was also expected to provide opportunities to learn from networking with other learners and to provide the opportunities to learn the skills that could not be provided through the workplace. In many instances, comments from many of the stakeholders seem to reinforce the on-the-job/off-the-job dichotomy where learning at work provided the site for the development of work-related skills and knowledge and the off-site environment provided opportunities for the development of 'underpinning knowledge' (that is, theory).

Assessment was seen to provide critical information to a range of people interested in the progress of apprentices and trainees through their training. Assessment provided a 'guarantee' that the specified competencies had been achieved. It was a mechanism by which employers (often through the involvement of supervisors and other workers trained as workplace assessors) could gain information about workers to inform future decision-making in relation to promotion and further training opportunities. Assessment in the form of RPL was viewed as a major way of ensuring the development of customised training programs, especially for experienced workers. Assessment of apprentices' and trainees' learning in areas such as occupational health and safety (OH&S) and hygiene assisted employers to meet their legislative responsibilities in these areas.

Impact of expectations on approaches to learning and assessment

The expectations articulated by key stakeholders required that learning and assessment processes deliver a range of outcomes, including the development of technical, work-related and generic skills. These outcomes required a high degree of commitment from employers to provide apprentices and trainees with a wide range of work experiences and, optimally, learning in both on- and off-the-job sites.

There was also an expectation for training providers, particularly through training away from the work site, to support the development of non-enterprise-specific skills and knowledge. Because many apprenticeships still heavily rely on an integrated model of training, the issue of facilitating the transfer of learning from off-site learning environments to the workplace was a key expectation. Off-site learning environments were also seen to play a key role in assisting apprentices to develop those skills that could not be fully developed in the workplace.

A similar set of expectations existed for trainees where an integrated model of training was used. Participants stressed the importance of skilled workplace practitioners to the skill development process for trainees. This was particularly important for the skill transfer process where these practitioners facilitated learning by contextualising learning for the trainees. The focus groups also stressed the important role that off-site training plays in ameliorating the effects of poor work practices on trainees' skill development.

Different approaches to learning and assessment identified in apprenticeships and traineeships

Respondents were able to identify a range of different approaches to organising learning and assessment for trainees and apprentices. Approaches to learning and assessment varied along a number of continua, including:

- the mix of learning and assessment undertaken either during the course of normal work or undertaken away from the work site
- the degree of 'formality' in learning and assessment processes
- the extent to which learning and assessment were facilitated by qualified teachers and trainers, especially designated workers, or were left to those workers who happened to be working with the apprentices or trainees

Ways of organising learning included approaches that:

- combined learning on the job and in off-site environments geographically removed from the workplace (for example, a TAFE institute or private training provider)
- combined learning at work with the withdrawal of apprentices and trainees from normal work duties to attend training provided at another location within the enterprise (for example, in a training room or a skills centre)
- used day-to-day work as the sole site for learning

Numerous learning strategies were mentioned, but those that were interactive, treated apprentices and trainees as adults and were responsive to their learning needs and styles were considered of greatest benefit. Self-paced modules to be completed either in the learner's own time or during specified times during work (these could incorporate the use of on-line and multimedia technologies) were also used widely in both apprenticeships and traineeships. Respondents highlighted a number of innovative approaches to learning aimed at meeting special needs of trainees—for example, the delivery of training modules in indigenous languages and assessment undertaken in the community in remote areas of Australia.

Approaches to assessment could include those that relied solely on summative assessment and those that utilised both formative and summative assessment tasks. The off-site environment appeared to be the most common site for assessment in the case of apprentices, although there were instances where real and simulated environments were used in tandem. Traineeships were more likely to use the workplace for assessment purposes. Demonstration of competence via performance and the results of pen and paper tests were common assessment strategies. A range of people, including personnel from an RTO or from within an enterprise who had received training as assessors, conducted such assessment.

In the case of both assessment and learning, respondents made a distinction between more formal approaches to learning and assessment which were more easily quantifiable and recognised and informal approaches which were much less visible. Informal learning and assessment which occurs through work, often in interaction with work colleagues engaged in the same task, was seen as absolutely critical to the learning of apprentices and trainees. These types of informal learning are evident in the learning culture that resides in a particular enterprise and arise out of the ways in which learning and work are organised to accommodate each other.

Factors that promote and inhibit successful approaches to learning and assessment

Respondents did not unanimously endorse any one particular model of assessment and learning as the most beneficial. Instead, they emphasised that a range of learning and assessment models could potentially be successful. A summary of respondents' views on the critical factors that support or inhibit successful approaches to learning and assessment is presented in figure 4.

Figure 4: Factors contributing to or inhibiting the implementation of successful approaches to learning and assessment for apprentices and trainees

Contributing factors	Inhibiting factors
◆ A priority is placed on apprentices' and trainees' twin roles as learners and workers and providing the pastoral care as needed	◆ Little interest is placed on apprentices' and trainees' role as learners or any other factors that may impact on their ability to learn and work
◆ The presence of a culture within an enterprise where learning is valued, supported and promoted (i.e. there is a learning culture)	◆ Learning is not valued within the enterprise
◆ Funding models which are realistic and take into account the realities of providing training and assessment for apprentices from diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds	
◆ Employers are committed to their trainees and apprentices as learners	◆ Employers view trainees and apprentices as 'subsidised labour'
◆ Experienced, quality practitioners work and train apprentices and trainees in the workplace and in off-site learning environments	◆ Co-opted workers who have little motivation or interest in apprentices' or trainees' learning; trainers and teachers who are out of touch with the realities of the workplace
◆ Trainees and apprentices who are motivated, willing to learn and who display some aptitude for their work	◆ Trainees and apprentices who are not motivated and are ill-suited to the work they are undertaking
◆ High quality communication and reporting processes are maintained amongst all parties involved in the contract of training	◆ Communication and reporting processes are infrequent or non-existent
◆ Culturally appropriate and relevant materials and course content for trainees/apprentices (this is particularly important for indigenous trainees and apprentices) are provided	◆ Little or no attention is paid to issues such as cultural relevance of materials or training strategies
◆ Literacy and numeracy needs of apprentices and trainees are taken into account in the design of learning and assessment strategies	◆ Numeracy and literacy needs are ignored
◆ Quality manuals and other training resources are provided	◆ Manuals and training resources are out of date and not relevant to workplace requirements
◆ Approaches to learning and assessment utilise both the workplace and off-the-job environments	◆ Models of learning which use work as the only site for learning
◆ Both formative and summative assessment strategies that optimise opportunities for frequent and timely feedback are employed	◆ Assessment strategies that use only summative assessment and where little or no feedback is provided

Contributing factors (cont.)	Inhibiting factors (cont.)
◆ Opportunities are provided to apprentices and trainees to participate in activities such as committees and team meetings which provide sites for them to share their learning and to feel that their opinions and ideas are valued within the enterprise	
◆ The provision of a rich range of learning contexts and experiences (where apprentices and trainees are able to work at a level most suited to their experience and gradually be exposed to a rich array of work that is more complex and challenging over time)	◆ Apprentices and trainees are confined to routine tasks with little variation in work routine and no opportunities to experience new tasks
◆ Processes ensure that all parties to the contract of training (employers, trainees/apprentices, training providers) are clear about what is expected of them and are fully oriented to the processes that will be in place during the contract of training are provided	◆ All parties are unaware or ignore their rights and responsibilities
◆ Provision for flexible exit and entry via the use of assessment on demand	◆ Training programs are driven by the schedules of the training provider and assessment is only available at set times
◆ Attempts are made to align the on-the-job experiences with the off-the-job learning to facilitate the integration of learning by apprentices and trainees	◆ On- and off-site learning environments have little in common and provide apprentices and trainees with conflicting and contradictory information
◆ Learning strategies that treat apprentices and trainees as adults, are interactive and provide opportunities for networking	◆ Learning strategies which are 'school like'

It is important to note that some respondents reported a number of totally opposing views on how best to organise learning and assessment for apprentices and trainees. Some employers, managers and trainees are so enthusiastic about learning based in the workplace that they dismiss the value of learning in any other situation such as in a TAFE institute or private provider. Such learning and assessment was seen to be irrelevant and a waste of time for the apprentices and trainees. In contrast, one respondent who worked with trainees employed in work roles that involved them working largely on their own, endorsed the off-site environment as the only realistic place where learning could be facilitated for these workers. Some participants expressed concern about the quality of VET in schools. They believed that sufficient standards of learning were not being achieved, so that some even expressed a preference for students not to undertake VET at school. Others were positive about the learning achieved by those who undertook traineeships/apprenticeships at school, considering they did develop a good basis for building on their learning in the post-school world of work.

There were also varying views on training providers' capacity to support learning in the workplace and provide reliable assessment services. While many providers were diligent and effective in devising training plans, regularly visiting worksites and reviewing progress of trainees and apprentices, thus enabling extended learning to take place, others were criticised for being lax in providing these services to learners. A number of participants noted the lack of current knowledge of industry needs held by some provider staff. It was also noted that some training providers could have difficulty in monitoring the quality of the on-the-job learning and then dealing with any subsequent gaps or deficiencies that might be identified.

It was suggested that some training providers and employers regarded trainees as additional, part-funded and temporary labour and not longer term human resources that should be developed and nurtured. There was some criticism of New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs) as being too focussed on getting trainees taken on by organisations and not ensuring that workplaces and providers were taking the learning and education dimensions seriously enough. Issues were also raised with regard to the effectiveness of the regulating regime at State and Territory level for RTOs. In particular, some were seen as not meeting registration and accreditation standards, and a number of respondents called for improved auditing of RTOs' capacities and operations.

Conclusion

As would be expected, there were divergent views on many aspects of the purposes of apprenticeships and traineeships and the quality of learning and assessment within them. As a result, there were also many different opinions about how best to organise learning and assessment in order to achieve these stated purposes of apprenticeships and traineeships.

Many respondents questioned the efficacy of approaches to learning and assessment which include no other learning opportunities other than those afforded through completing work tasks. Integrated approaches to learning and assessment that combined learning at work with the withdrawal of apprentices and trainees from routine work were strongly supported.

The key element in facilitating successful learning and assessment lies in the strength of the partnership developed between the trainee/apprentice, the employer and the RTO. The central factor in quality partnerships is the belief that these provide the best environment where contextualised learning can be fostered. Quality partnerships were seen to offer the best chance for apprentices and trainees to participate in learning processes where the 'concepts, systems and principles', which foster the development of vocational knowledge and skills that are both relevant to the work context and transferable, might be developed.

Learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships: Learner expectations and perspectives

This chapter focusses on the expectations and perspectives of the study's apprentices and trainees concerning their learning and assessment. The analysis is based on interview data obtained during the visits to the 20 case study sites (as explained in the Introduction). The chapter commences with an examination of apprentices' and trainees' expectations in relation to learning and assessment during their contracts of training. The impact of these expectations on learning and assessment processes is then explored. The final section of the chapter presents apprentices' and trainees' perspectives on the factors that inhibit their learning and assessment in on- and off-site learning environments.

Trainees' and apprentices' expectations of learning and assessment

For many apprentices and trainees, the main outcome and reason for learning was the achievement of a 'qualification'. This was a strong motivating force for many respondents, particularly the achievement of a nationally recognised qualification that was valued within the wider community.

Apprentices and trainees expected that learning would be the core activity during their contract of training. They expected that their learning would enable them to develop confidence and competence in their current work role. The process was also expected to equip them with the ability to undertake more complex tasks over time and to develop them as independent workers. The combination of becoming competent in their current position and the completion of a qualification was seen as providing the foundation for subsequent opportunities to complete further qualifications and/or promotion, either with their present employer or within the industry in general.

There was a general expectation amongst apprentices and trainees that the learning they undertook as part of their contract of training would lay the foundation for their future learning. Apprentices and trainees were well aware of the constant change within their industries (for example, new machinery or new and improved methods of operation) that they would encounter over their working lives. They expected that their contract of training would equip them with the skills and knowledge to be able to continue to develop and learn as their work circumstances changed over time.

A number of apprentices and trainees expected that their learning would result in improved quality of service to clients and increased productivity for their employers. In these instances, the apprentices and trainees clearly noted a relationship (and a potential point of tension) between their needs as learners and the needs of their employers.

Apprentices and trainees believed that assessment processes were essential to 'proving' that they had acquired the knowledge and skills needed to be recognised as 'qualified' workers in their chosen occupation.

Impact of expectations on approaches to learning and assessment

Most apprentices and trainees believed that the outcomes they sought from their contract of training would best be achieved through a combination of both on- and off-the-job learning. However, there was significant variation amongst respondents as to the amount of learning that should take place in each of these environments. Two respondents believed that learning should occur fully on the job, as this was the site where they learnt skills and knowledge that were directly relevant to their everyday work roles. For others, there was a general belief that the on- and off-the-job environments would complement each other and provide the best environment for achieving their learning goals.

Learning away from work was expected to provide opportunities to learn theory—that is, the 'why' that underpinned the everyday work tasks they performed. It was also expected to provide a deeper understanding of the industry and the learner's place within it. This broader knowledge was seen to be valuable for the learner's present position and for their long-term future within the industry. Off-the-job learning was also seen to be an opportunity to compare learning and work experiences with co-workers and learners from other organisations.

Apprentices and trainees believed that learning at work would also provide information and skills about 'how' to do their job. This involved being taught how to perform everyday tasks (for example, specific skills relating to company machinery). The learners also expected that the people teaching them on the job would be willing and able to offer any extra assistance or guidance that was required. Some interviewees mentioned that they expected on-the-job trainers to teach them 'how to do things properly'. This was seen to be a good foundation for the learners to develop their own 'style' in the future.

As with the learning, interviewees expected to be assessed both on and off the job. While particular methods of assessment were rarely mentioned, there was general discussion on whether assessment should be undertaken by co-workers or by an independent person.

For most respondents, the status of apprentice or trainee embodied dual roles as workers and learners and signified an important first step in the development of their career. For some, becoming 'trainees' meant they changed their employment status from casual to full-time employees. They enjoyed the benefits, such as sick leave and holiday leave, and felt that the company had made a commitment to them and would be less likely to terminate their employment.

A number of learners made particular reference to their employer's commitment to them through giving them the opportunity to complete a traineeship or apprenticeship. In the words of one trainee:

> *the traineeship was, well, it was a commitment basically from [the employer], saying that they're going to put their effort into training me to become as good as I can become and it's up to me to do the reciprocating.*

Within this context of dual roles as workers and learners, apprentices and trainees in this study expressed high levels of satisfaction with their experiences and believed that their expectations with regard to assessment and learning were being met. In two case study sites, these expectations were being met through learning and assessment located entirely within an enterprise, while the rest of the case study sites used a combination of on- and off-the-job learning and assessment. Wherever the learning and assessment occurred, the most successful combination provided adequate opportunities and time for effective and appropriate learning and assessment.

Learning on the job

The trainees and apprentices agreed that the workplace was vital for their learning: 'getting out there and doing it was a help. You can be told something a hundred times, but when you do it, that's when you start learning'.

On-the-job learning was predominantly facilitated within a 'one to one' relationship with another worker. The on-the-job learning process that most learners preferred was one where the task would be explained to them as they observed the more-experienced person performing it. The learner would then perform the tasks with the supervisor close by if guidance was needed or if the learner wanted to ask a question.

The learners valued having the trainer close by, noting that 'it helps your confidence'. Once the learner was performing the task confidently and competently, the supervisor would leave them to perform the task independently only coming back occasionally to ask the learner whether they were 'OK'. The learners said the supervisor would also observe the learner's performance and offer any extra guidance or assistance that was required.

Being able to ask questions of work colleagues was a central feature of the learning process. As one apprentice noted:

> *a fair bit of it has do with your self-confidence as well. If you don't have a lot of confidence, you're not going to learn very quickly. If you want to learn and you've got the confidence to ask people for help and they're willing to give you help, then you know, you'll learn fairly quickly, but if it's the opposite, you sort of really slow down and get into a ditch and think, 'What am I doing?*

Experienced colleagues (e.g. 'tradesmen', 'buddies') facilitated most learning on the work site. Apprentices and trainees believed that these people were the 'best people to learn from'. Not only were they experienced and qualified but they were familiar with the specific work setting. Some learners had a number of experienced people on their worksite who potentially could provide opportunities to observe a number of different work methods. The learners in these circumstances could then try these different methods and decide which suited them and begin to incorporate these into their own work practices.

Apprentices and trainees also valued opportunities to work unsupervised and to be given more complex tasks to tackle. This type of work enabled apprentices' and trainees' confidence and competence levels to be challenged and extended. These opportunities also contributed to promoting high levels of job satisfaction.

Apprentices and trainees noted a number of other work practices and particular features of the workplace that provided valuable support for learning. These included:

- *Having an opportunity to train others*
  Some learners believed being given the opportunity to train others in the workplace demonstrated to work colleagues and supervisors that they had thorough knowledge of the topic and meant they 'had moved up the ladder'. This training usually occurred in either participating in committees or training casual employees.

- *Being given opportunities to complete workbooks during work hours*
  Not only did this give the learner an opportunity to 'get away from their work' for a while but they valued having access to work colleagues and instruction manuals if they were required. One trainee said it was good to have time at work to complete his workbook so he didn't have to do it at home 'when I am tired'.

- *Participating in workplace committees*
  The learners valued this opportunity not only because they could pass on their knowledge but also they felt that the employer valued their opinions and ideas. As one trainee said, 'we've got a lot to say about how things run because we're doing it, which is good'.
- *Having access to training manuals and instruction books*
- *Experiencing 'quiet times'*
  Some work sites and industries experienced 'quiet times'. The learners explained that these were good times to learn because work colleagues had more time to teach them and they had more time to learn. These quiet times also gave the learners opportunities to work in different areas of the work site or to learn how to operate a new piece of machinery.

Learning off the job

Some apprentices and trainees attended off-the-job learning in blocks of one week. They agreed that this was better than attending one day per week over a number of weeks because it was less disruptive to work patterns and it gave them more 'time to learn'. However, other trainees attended off-the-job learning during day release. This was preferred in some industries by both employers and learners.

The trainees and apprentices continually referred to the off-the-job learning environment as the place where they learned 'why' they do things. This environment provided them with in-depth knowledge of the overall industry and their role within it. The learners valued the extra time that off-the-job trainers usually had to teach them. As one apprentice stated, 'they've got more time because it's their job to teach us'.

For some learners the off-the-job environment also provided them with opportunities to discuss their learning and work experiences with other learners. This was more valuable to learners who came from smaller companies or who did not work with other learners on a regular basis. One respondent expressed it in this way:

> *It's just interesting to hear how they talk about things they do and the way they do their processes and the things that we do. It gives you a bit of an overview of other places and how they do things.*

Assessment on the job

Assessment was seen to provide feedback and information on what the learners had achieved during their contract of training. The assessment was a combination of informal (for example, comments made by co-workers) and formal processes (such as the completion of a logbook or the recording of competencies on an individual training program).

Many interviewees commented on the continual informal and formal assessment that occurred on the job. Such assessment assisted apprentices and trainees in tracking their progress. They received immediate information that assisted them to gauge how their knowledge and skill levels were developing over time.

Informal assessment was usually provided in the form of positive comments made by colleagues or supervisors. The learners also commented that their co-workers or supervisors might assess them by leaving them to complete their work independently or with little supervision. The learners believed that this demonstrated that the buddy had 'assessed' them as being competent in that task.

Formal assessment was more structured than informal assessment and connected with processes which noted the achievement of competencies essential to the completion of a qualification. In most instances, the learners could decide when they wanted to be assessed.

The learners valued this because they could work at their own pace and spend more time on some areas but have the opportunity to 'fast track' through competencies with which they were already confident and competent. Assessment was either performed by staff drawn from the workplace (usually specifically trained for their role) or staff from an RTO or GTC. Some learners preferred to be assessed by assessors from their own workplace, whilst others preferred off-the-job assessors because 'they are independent'.

Formal assessment presented difficulties for those apprentices and trainees who did not have qualified workplace assessors in their workplaces. In these circumstances, assessment would only occur when the assessor was able to arrange a suitable time with the learner and the workplace. This presented even more difficulties when competencies could only be assessed at particular times of the year. For example, in the wine industry, some machinery is only used during vintage. This limited the time and opportunity for assessment. If the assessor was unable to visit during this time, the learner may have to wait a considerable length of time before having another opportunity to be assessed.

In some instances, the satisfactory completion of competencies was linked directly to pay increments. This was seen to be further acknowledgement of skill and knowledge development. In some industries, satisfactory completion of competencies and qualifications enabled the learner to relieve in a higher position or to apply for a promotion.

Assessment off the job

Off-the-job assessment was conducted either individually or in small groups. A number of assessment methods were used including:

- *Written tests*
  This could be in the form of formulating new, or evaluating existing, workplace policies, a research assignment, workbooks or exams.
- *Practical exercises*
  This may be observing the learner operating a piece of machinery, performing a job-related task.
- *Oral questioning*
  This could include a tape recording of an interview, presenting information to the class or work group.

Factors that inhibit learning and assessment for apprentices and trainees

As this research study consciously selected case studies that were judged by stakeholders to be examples of 'good practice', it was only to be expected that most learning environments would be deemed by learners to be both effective and appropriate. This was generally the case. Nevertheless, apprentices and trainees were still able to provide valuable insights into areas where they believed some improvement was required.

On-the-job learning

- *The motivation and personality of their on-site trainers or 'buddies'*
  One interviewee expressed in this way the danger of being influenced by less than helpful workplace colleagues:

  The ones that show enthusiasm for the workplace are generally the ones you ask 'cause you know you'll be able to talk with them, whereas people who don't particularly have an interest in it or they're there 'til they get their next job, well, you wouldn't ask those people because then you seem to sort of get a bit affected by their attitude sometimes.

Some learners discussed how some work colleagues were experienced and competent at their job but weren't 'good teachers'. Factors that were mentioned included being given unclear or incomplete instruction, not receiving appropriate or correct answers to questions and generally being made to feel uncomfortable about their role as learners because of the impact it had on work flow and output. One learner, who had had limited off-the-job training, commented that his on-the-job trainers explained how to do tasks but not why. This became an issue when problems occurred and 'I don't know how to fix them'.

- *Different methods of operation*

  Apprentices and trainees usually work with a wide range of people who provide varying degrees of assistance to them. Inevitably, many of these workers use a variety of different work methods and demonstrate a wide range of skills. While this provided apprentices and trainees with a very 'rich' learning environment, it was also confusing for some learners who ultimately needed to make a decision about the 'correct' way to undertake tasks. Apprentices and trainees often spoke of the support they needed to assist them with the process of integrating their learning and wanting to be instructed in the 'right' way first and then being supported as they made adaptations to develop their own methods.

- *Boredom*

  Some learners said they became 'bored' at work because they were continually performing the same tasks and had 'stopped learning'. While apprentices and trainees acknowledged that they had to do some of the 'lower' level tasks, they also wanted to learn and have experience performing more complex tasks.

  Boredom often seemed to be an issue for apprentices and trainees who were employed in smaller enterprises that were not part of group training schemes. Often these employers had little opportunity to provide a variety of work tasks, and work demands often precluded the use of inexperienced workers on tasks that required 'the best person for the job'.

- *Wages and conditions to support learning*

  Some apprentices and trainees commented on the impact of their level of their pay on their motivation to learn and work. While it wasn't mentioned that they were considering terminating their contract of training because of the wage level, they did mention that higher pay would 'help'.

  At times the work demands were high and work colleagues become very busy. Learners commented that they were reluctant to ask questions during these times because they 'don't have time to stop and teach you'.

Off-the-job learning

- *Boredom*

  Some learners said they had become bored during off-the-job training. This was more likely to occur where they had had some previous on-the-job experience in the industry or where they had completed related subjects during their secondary education. While they acknowledged they had 'picked up one or two things' during the off-the-job training, they had found much of the information repetitive or 'not relevant to me'. Apprentices and trainees thought that greater application of RPL processes would contribute to reducing boredom and also facilitate their learning. In addition, more effective communication between the on- and off-the-job learning environments could also reduce duplication and enhance the efficiency of learning.

- *Sharing experiences with other learners*

  Learners who did not attend off-the-job training felt that they would like this opportunity. In particular, they wanted to share experiences with learners from different companies and industries:

  > *That'd be great. That would be excellent, to see how it was suitable for other people and what type of experiences they're getting. Because cross-pollination of ideas, what works there, doesn't work here, but they can teach us why it does work, what we could adopt here that we just haven't seen here.*

- *Geographic location of off-the-job training*

  If the learners were in remote locations and had long distances to travel to the off-the-job site, this often limited their access to training. When the off-the-job training involved being away from home for a length of time, this also caused significant problems, such as in organising childcare. Part-time and female employees particularly noted this issue.

- *Instructors, facilities and equipment*

  A small number of interviewees commented that their off-the-job instructors inhibited their learning because they were not 'supportive or encouraging'. A small number also stated that equipment and facilities at their off-the-job site were 'out of date'.

- *Flexibility*

  Some trainees involved in school-based traineeships commented on the lack of timetabling flexibility offered by the school. While it was acknowledged that there was only a relatively small number of students in this position, the lack of flexibility meant that these learners had the added responsibility of 'making up' missed classes.

On-the-job assessment

A number of factors were noted as inhibiting apprentices' and trainees' satisfaction with assessment practices used as part of their learning. Within the workplace these factors included:

- *Lack of opportunities for informal assessment*

  Many apprentices and trainees noted the value of frequent and timely feedback from their colleagues. In particular, the provision of positive feedback and encouragement was highly valued. The absence of formative, informal assessment significantly impacted on apprentices' and trainees' attitudes and feelings about their work and learning. As one trainee commented, 'If you haven't been growled at, you've done the right thing'. Another trainee commented that he 'self-assessed': he would compare his work with that of colleagues on either side of him, and if his work appeared to be similar, he would conclude, 'I must be doing it right'.

- *Timing and nature of formal assessment processes*

  A number of learners mentioned the time taken to complete logbooks or similar documents and the impact this had on their work. While they acknowledged that it did show what they had achieved, they regarded the process as overly time-consuming and somewhat distracting.

  One trainee discussed the lack of regular formal assessment. As his employer did not have any trained workplace assessors, he had to wait for the training provider to organise assessment visits. This problem was often compounded by work patterns that meant that assessment was only possible at certain times (for example, when a particular task was being undertaken in the workplace). Significant time gaps between learning and assessment processes were seen to place some apprentices and trainees at a significant disadvantage and impede the completion of their training.

Off-the-job assessment

Apprentices and trainees generally believed that assessment processes used in their off-site training were successful. The only significant factor mentioned was that the number of assessors available in the off-site environments needed to be increased because they often 'wasted time' waiting for an assessor to become available.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the trainees and apprentices interviewed during case study visits were generally having their learning and assessment expectations fulfilled. These expectations were more likely to be met in the cases where there was a combination of on- and off-the-job learning and assessment.

The main providers of on-the-job learning were co-workers, buddies and supervisors. This relationship was most successful where co-workers were knowledgeable, experienced and willing and able to answer questions from learners. The interviewees valued having the opportunity to learn from these people because the learning was tailored to their needs. On-the-job learning also gave the learners' opportunities to demonstrate that they were capable of being given more complex tasks to complete and increasingly to work independently.

The on-the-job environment did not meet the learners' expectations when they felt they weren't learning any new skills or information. While many learners acknowledged that they had to do the more menial tasks, they also expressed a desire to continue learning about the job and the industry in order to develop their own style of operating and to see what opportunities may be available in the future.

On-the-job assessment was valued when it was continuous. The learners could see, both through formal acknowledgement of achieving competencies and by their own increased confidence and competence, that they were achieving goals such as the completion of their qualification. Learners reported valuing the opportunity to nominate when they were ready to be assessed. This was valued because the learners could progress at their own pace, either taking more time or fast tracking through competencies. The on-the-job assessment did not meet the expectations of the learners when assessment was sporadic because the site did not have qualified on-the-job assessors. This meant that the traineeship or apprenticeship would take longer to complete.

Off-the-job learning and assessment was more likely to meet the expectations of the learners when it was provided by knowledgeable and motivated instructors. The interviewees particularly mentioned valuing off-the-job instructors who had worked in the industry and had an understanding of the tasks the learner may be asked to undertake. The off-the-job environment generally allowed the learner to learn at their own pace and to share experiences with other learners. Those learners who did not work with other trainees or apprentices on a daily basis especially valued this opportunity.

In summary, the learners' expectations were more likely to be met when they were continually learning new information and skills in an environment that was supportive and aware of their needs and expectations. In this instance, such support was provided through co-workers and instructors who were interested in the learners and their progression, were willing to offer assistance and answer questions when needed, provided appropriate resources and equipment and furnished opportunities to continually learn and be assessed on skills and knowledge.

Learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships: Learner experiences

This chapter concentrates on the experiences of apprentices and trainees in learning and assessment within their contracts of training. Whereas the previous chapter analysed interview text from learners in general in a wide range of industries, this chapter zooms in on two occupations in order to examine these experiences in more detail. Two aspects are of particular interest here—first, responses of apprentices are investigated separately from those of trainees, and second, attention is paid to the learning and assessment experiences of apprentices and trainees who are undertaking contracts of training entirely within their workplaces.

The analysis here is based on questionnaire data from 595 apprentices and trainees in the two selected occupations—motor mechanics and hospitality workers (as explained in the Introduction). Learner experiences in this chapter are examined in terms of the importance placed on aspects in their learning environments and whether these aspects are deemed to be actually present in the workplaces and training providers. In this sense, the chapter provides an evaluation of on- and off-the-job approaches to learning and assessment as seen through the eyes of the participating apprentices and trainees in the two occupations (refer to appendix E for characteristics of the samples).

Apprentices and their workplace learning environment

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of various aspects of their workplace environment in terms of assisting them to learn (see questionnaire in appendix D). Table 4 shows the means and rankings of these items in order of their importance (weightings were assigned to respondents' ratings: 3 = important, 2 = of some importance and 1 = not important).

The top ten items rated as most important reflect some of the core components of a quality learning and assessment system. These include effective instructors, clearly articulated processes for assessment in the workplace, quality relationships between apprentices and their workplace colleagues and the opportunity to undertake meaningful work that will support learning.

The factors that were rated as the least important by apprentices and trainees included:

- being able to work at their own pace
- having persons especially designated to help apprentices/trainees learn
- being able to be formally assessed at work
- having opportunities to talk to people about what apprentices/trainees are learning in their off-site training

These lower ratings may represent apprentices' pragmatic responses to the realities of learning in a work environment where work processes often take priority over learning. Additionally, assessment for apprentices may be largely confined to simulated or off-site environments.

Table 4: Ranking of apprentices' importance ratings of aspects of their workplace environment in assisting them to learn (means, in order of importance)

Various aspects of the workplace environment	Mean	Ranking of importance
The trainers in your workplace are effective instructors	2.86	1
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	2.81	2
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	2.80	3
You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	2.79	4
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time	2.78	5
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	2.74	6
At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	2.73	7
Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	2.72	= 8
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	2.72	= 8
Your employer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	2.71	10
There is time allowed for you to practise the skills you are learning in your workplace	2.70	11
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel ready	2.69	12
Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	2.67	= 13
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	2.67	= 13
There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	2.66	=15
You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	2.66	= 15
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	2.66	= 15
Trainers/employers are interested in your future in the workforce	2.62	18
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	2.61	19
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	2.60	20
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with people who work with you	2.52	21
You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	2.51	22
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while you are at work	2.50	23
At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	2.44	24
You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-site training	2.41	25
Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	2.39	26

Apprentices were also asked to indicate whether each aspect listed was currently happening in their workplaces. These data are presented in table 5, along with the mean rating of importance for each item already presented in the previous table.

Table 5: Apprentices' views on whether aspects that helped them to learn were currently happening in their workplaces

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Rating of importance Mean	Currently happening in their workplace? Yes		No		Missing data
		n	%	*n*	%	
The trainers in your workplace are effective instructors	2.86	337	83.2	68	16.8	18
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	2.81	236	68.2	110	31.8	77
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	2.80	357	88.6	46	11.4	20
You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	2.79	166	43.7	214	56.3	43
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time	2.78	355	86.2	57	13.8	11
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	2.74	293	71.6	116	28.4	14
At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	2.73	240	59.9	161	40.1	22
Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	2.72	354	86.8	54	13.2	15
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	2.72	273	68.1	128	31.9	22
Your employer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	2.71	300	73.7	107	26.3	16
There is time allowed for you to practise the skills you are learning in your workplace	2.70	262	65.0	141	35.0	20
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel ready	2.69	162	52.3	148	47.7	113
Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	2.67	347	86.1	56	13.9	20
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	2.67	296	71.3	109	26.3	8
You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	2.66	373	94.2	23	5.8	27
There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	2.66	254	63.0	149	37.0	20
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	2.66	299	74.8	101	25.3	23
Trainers/employers are interested in your future in the workforce	2.62	276	68.7	126	31.3	21
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	2.61	275	67.9	130	32.1	18
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	2.60	296	73.4	107	26.5	20
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with people who work with you	2.52	323	80.1	80	19.9	20

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Rating of importance Mean	Currently happening in their workplace? Yes		No		Missing data
		n	%	*n*	%	
You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	2.51	266	66.7	133	33.3	24
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while you are at work	2.50	189	64.5	104	35.5	130
At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	2.44	166	43.7	214	56.3	43
You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-site training	2.41	220	56.1	172	43.9	31
Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	2.39	206	53.2	181	46.8	36

Apprentices believe that some of the conditions they rate as important are currently not as prevalent in their workplaces as they might be. Of particular importance to note are the following nine aspects which, despite being rated as important (with a mean above 2.6), were absent from approximately one-third to over one-half of all workplaces:

- opportunities to work on their own (56%)
- being able to be formally assessed when they are ready (48%)
- being given feedback and encouragement about their work performance (40%)
- opportunities to talk to employer/trainer about what they'd like to learn (37%)
- opportunities to practise their skills (35%)
- being aware of exactly what is required when being assessed in the workplace (32%)
- being able to attend classes and workshops that count towards their qualification (32%)
- employers/trainers taking time to talk to them about their job (32%)
- employers/trainers showing interest in their future in the workforce (31%)

Apprentices and their off-site learning environment

A large number (n = 372) of apprentices reported they were undertaking contracts of training that included training with an off-site training provider. These respondents were asked to rate the importance of a number of different aspects of their off-site learning environment using the same scale outlined above for their opinions about their on-the-job learning environment. (Data for these items are presented in appendix F.) Table 6 shows the means and rankings of these items in order of their importance.

Table 6: Ranking of apprentices' importance ratings of aspects of their off-site learning environment in assisting them to learn (means, in order of importance)

Various aspects in the off-site learning environment	Mean	Ranking of importance
The off-the-job trainers/teachers are effective instructors	2.88	1
There are opportunities for you to practise skills that you are not learning in your workplace	2.80	2
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested in the off-site environment	2.78	3
There are opportunities for you to talk to your teachers/trainers about what you would like to learn	2.72	4
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed	2.71	5
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who are learning with you	2.66	6
There are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your on-site training	2.63	7
Teachers/trainers are aware and up to date with what is happening in the workplace	2.61	8
You have opportunities to talk with your teachers/trainers about what you are learning in your workplace	2.56	9
Teachers/trainers are interested about your future in the work force	2.54	= 10
Teachers/trainers take time to talk to you about your job	2.54	= 10
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel you are ready	2.45	12

The clear factor that apprentices rate as of highest importance in both on- and off-site learning environments is effectiveness of their teachers and trainers. Apprentices also rated issues relating to determining what they might learn and assessment processes as highly important.

Apprentices were asked to indicate whether each aspect listed was currently happening in their off-site learning environments. These data are presented in table 7.

The overall picture from these data is that the apprentices rate their off-site learning environments very highly in terms of providing those aspects they believe to be important to helping learning. Six aspects identified as important by apprentices were currently happening in over four-fifths of all off-site training locations. Apprentices believed that the off-site instructors were effective and provide time to talk about learning in the workplace. Apprentices stated that they are given time to practise skills they are not currently learning in their workplaces. Assessment is available off site for a majority of apprentices and, when assessment takes place, apprentices believe they know what is required of them when demonstrating their competence. Approximately three-quarters of all off-site learning environments provided apprentices with time to talk about their job and to try out some of the skills and ideas that they have learned whilst at their jobs. Off-site teachers and trainers also displayed interest in the apprentices' future in the workforce.

However, apprentices reported that they do not consider their off-site teachers as up to date with the workplace as their ratings of importance would suggest they should be. Apprentices also believe that input into what they would like to learn and the timing of their assessments is not happening as often as they would like. Conversely, however, the off-site environment appears to offer greater opportunities for teachers to talk with apprentices about their job and their future in the workforce. The opportunities for networking and sharing amongst apprentices are also a significant feature of the off-site learning environment, as is the opportunity to practise skills that are not being learnt in the workplace.

Table 7: Apprentices' views on whether aspects that helped them to learn were currently happening in their off-site learning environments

Various aspects in the off-site learning environment	Importance	Currently happening in your off-site training?				Missing data
	Mean	Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
The off-the-job trainers/teachers are effective instructors	2.88	294	83.5	58	16.5	20
There are opportunities for you to practice skills that you are not learning in your workplace	2.80	309	87.3	45	12.7	18
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested in the off-site environment	2.78	307	88.0	42	12.0	23
There are opportunities for you to talk to your teachers/trainers about what you would like to learn	2.72	236	68.6	108	31.4	28
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed	2.71	295	85.3	51	14.7	26
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who are learning with you	2.66	321	90.7	33	9.3	18
There are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your on-site training	2.63	269	76.6	82	23.4	21
Teachers/trainers are aware and up to date with what is happening in the workplace	2.61	239	69.7	104	30.3	29
You have opportunities to talk with your teachers/trainers about what you are learning in your workplace	2.56	296	83.1	60	16.9	16
Teachers/trainers take time to talk to you about your job	2.54	266	74.7	90	25.3	16
Teachers/trainers are interested about your future in the workforce	2.54	271	77.0	81	23.0	20
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel you are ready	2.45	202	60.8	130	39.1	40

Comparing aspects of the workplace environment experiences for apprentices in 'workplace-only' and 'integrated' contracts of training

Fifty apprentices indicated that they were undertaking contracts of training that did not involve them going outside their workplace to an off-site training provider; 38 of these apprentices were employed in the automotive trades, with the remainder employed in the hospitality industry.

A chi-square test was applied to the relationship between the model of training (totally on the job and integrated) and each aspect of the workplace environment which facilitated learning for the apprentices. This analysis found only four aspects where there was a significant difference between the two models of training. (Full statistical data can be found in appendix F.) Apprentices in workplace-only contracts of training rated the following aspects of greater importance in helping them to learn than did apprentices in integrated contracts of training:

- you have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace (X^2 (df = 2, N = 407) = 12.41, p = <0.01)
- trainers/employers talk to you about your job (X^2 (df = 2, N = 167) = 8.48, p = <0.05)
- trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace (X^2 (df = 2, N = 409) = 7.10, p = <0.05)
- you are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time (X^2 (df = 2, N = 408) = 8.55, p = <0.05)

These aspects point to the critical role that quality relationships play in workplace-only contracts of training. Good relationships furnish the context in which discussion about work can take place. Over time, the trust that is embodied in these relationships will facilitate opportunities for apprentices to broaden and deepen their skill base by attempting more complex and difficult tasks.

The extent to which these aspects are currently happening in the workplace of these apprentices is reported in table 8. These data show that one-third of apprentices report that they currently do not have opportunities to talk about their work or to share their difficulties or concerns with their employer/trainer. Half of these apprentices in workplace-only contracts of training report not having people at work who are specially selected to help them with their learning at work.

These data also raise issues in relation to assessment. In particular, 28% of apprentices indicate that they are not made aware of what is required of them when they are being formally assessed. One-half of apprentices are also reporting a gap between the importance they place on being assessed when they feel ready and the reality of the workplace where assessment processes do not take this into account.

Table 8: Apprentices in workplace-only contracts of training—rating of importance for each aspect and the frequency of each aspect in their workplace

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Rating of importance	Currently happening in their workplace?				Missing data
	Mean	Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
The trainers in your workplace are effective instructors	2.96	37	82.2	8	17.8	5
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	2.84	28	71.8	11	28.2	11
You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	2.84	47	100.0	0.0	0.0	3
Trainers/employers are interested in your future in the workforce	2.74	33	71.7	13	28.3	4
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	2.74	32	71.1	13	28.9	5
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	2.72	32	69.6	14	30.4	4
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time	2.72	40	87.0	6	13.0	4
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	2.72	31	73.8	11	26.2	8
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	2.70	35	76.1	11	23.9	4
There is time allowed for you to practice the skills you are learning in your workplace	2.70	33	71.7	13	28.3	4
At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	2.68	27	61.4	17	38.6	6
Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	2.68	39	84.8	7	15.2	4
Your employer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	2.66	36	80.0	9	20.0	5
You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	2.66	41	95.3	2	4.7	7
Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	2.66	41	89.1	5	10.9	4
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	2.64	35	77.8	10	22.2	5

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Rating of importance	Currently happening in their workplace?				Missing data
	Mean	Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	2.62	42	89.4	5	10.6	3
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel ready	2.62	17	50.0	17	50.0	16
At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	2.58	19	46.3	22	53.7	9
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while you are at work	2.56	24	68.6	11	31.4	15
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with people who work with you	2.54	36	81.8	8	18.2	6
There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	2.54	34	73.9	12	26.1	4
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	2.54	30	66.7	15	33.3	5
Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	2.50	26	60.5	17	39.5	7
You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-site training	2.50	20	51.3	19	48.7	11
You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	2.46	28	63.6	16	36.4	6

Trainees and their workplace learning environment

Trainees were asked to rate the importance of various aspects of their workplace environment in terms of assisting them to learn (see questionnaire in appendix D). Table 9 shows the means and rankings of these items in order of their importance. As with the apprentices, weightings were assigned to respondents' ratings: 3 = important, 2 = of some importance and 1 = not important.

Four of the five most important aspects of workplace learning are associated with the nature of the relationship between the trainee and the people they work with and who train them. They point to the value placed on the quality of workplace relations.

An emphasis on the importance of time to the skill development process is also evident in the trainees' rankings. Time to practise and experience more difficult and complex work over time, as well as the value of having mistakes corrected by their workplace trainers, are ranked highly.

Table 9: Ranking of trainees' importance ratings of aspects of their workplace environment in assisting them to learn (means, in order of importance)

Various aspects of the workplace environment	Mean	Ranking of importance
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	2.83	1
The trainers in your workplace are effective instructors	2.80	= 2
At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	2.80	= 2
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	2.80	= 2
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	2.79	5
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time	2.78	6
There is time allowed for you to practise the skills you are learning in your workplace	2.77	7
Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	2.76	= 8
Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	2.76	= 8
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	2.76	= 8
There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	2.73	11
Your employer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	2.70	= 12
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	2.70	= 12
You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-site training	2.69	14
You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	2.66	= 15
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	2.66	= 15
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	2.66	= 15
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while you are at work	2.66	= 15
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel ready	2.65	19
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	2.62	20
Trainers/employers are interested in your future in the workforce	2.60	21
You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	2.58	= 22
You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	2.58	= 22
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with people who work with you	2.54	24
At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	2.50	25
Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	2.49	26

Trainees were also asked to indicate whether each aspect listed was currently happening in their workplaces. These data are presented in table 10 along with the mean rating of importance for each item.

Table 10: Trainees' views on whether aspects that helped them to learn were currently happening in their workplaces

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Rating of importance	Currently happening in their workplace?				Missing data
	Mean	Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	2.83	149	93.1	11	6.9	12
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	2.80	129	80.6	31	19.4	12
At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	2.80	117	71.3	47	28.7	8
The trainers in your workplace are effective instructors	2.80	119	75.8	38	24.2	15
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	2.79	119	73.5	43	26.5	10
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time	2.78	130	80.2	32	19.8	10
There is time allowed for you to practice the skills you are learning in your workplace	2.77	119	73.9	42	26.1	11
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	2.76	102	70.8	42	29.2	28
Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	2.76	141	86.0	23	14.0	8
Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	2.76	145	89.5	17	10.5	10
There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	2.73	118	73.8	42	26.3	12
Your employer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	2.70	128	79.0	34	21.0	10
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	2.70	119	73.5	43	26.5	10
You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-site training	2.69	81	57.4	60	42.6	31
You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	2.66	83	52.9	74	47.1	15
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	2.66	112	68.3	52	31.7	8

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Rating of importance Mean	Currently happening in their workplace? Yes		No		Missing data
		n	%	*n*	%	
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	2.66	122	76.3	38	23.8	12
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while you are at work	2.66	104	65.0	56	35.0	12
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel ready	2.65	103	66.9	51	33.1	18
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	2.62	85	54.5	71	45.5	16
Trainers/employers are interested in your future in the workforce	2.60	108	67.1	53	32.9	11
You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	2.58	98	61.6	61	38.4	13
You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	2.58	154	91.7	14	8.3	4
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with people who work with you	2.54	115	71.9	45	28.1	12
At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	2.50	83	52.9	74	47.1	15
Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	2.49	80	52.3	73	47.7	19

Of particular importance are the following seven aspects which, despite being rated as important (with a mean above 2.6), were absent from approximately one-third to one-half of all workplaces:

- opportunities to work on their own (47%)
- being able to attend classes and workshops that count towards their qualification (46%)
- opportunities to talk to employers/trainers about their off-site training (43%)
- opportunities to have their competence formally assessed while at work (35%)
- being able to be formally assessed when they are ready (33%)
- employers/trainers showing interest in their future in the workforce (33%)
- employers/trainers taking time to talk to them about their job (32%)

It is also informative to note that, in just under one-half of workplaces, there are not people selected especially to help trainees with their learning at work, nor are employers reported to organise work so that trainees can work at their own pace.

Trainees and their off-site learning environment

Eighty-four trainees reported that they were undertaking contracts of training that included an off-site training component. All but three of these trainees worked in the hospitality field. These respondents were asked to rate the importance of a number of different aspects of their off-site learning environment using the same scale outlined above for their opinions about their on-the-job learning environment (see questionnaire in appendix D).

Table 11 shows the ranking of each of these items in order of their importance, using means.

Table 11: Ranking of trainees' importance ratings of aspects of their off-site learning environment in assisting them to learn (means, in order of importance)

Various aspects in the off-site learning environment	Mean	Ranking of importance
The off-the-job trainers/teachers are effective instructors	2.87	1
There are opportunities for you to practise skills that you are not learning in your workplace	2.80	2
Teachers/trainers are interested about your future in the work force	2.71	3
There are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your on-site training	2.70	4
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested in the off-site environment	2.69	5
There are opportunities for you to talk to your teachers/trainers about what you would like to learn	2.64	6
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed	2.63	7
Teachers/trainers take time to talk to you about your job	2.62	8
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who are learning with you	2.60	= 9
You have opportunities to talk with your teachers/trainers about what you are learning in your workplace	2.60	= 9
Teachers/trainers are aware and up to date with what is happening in the workplace	2.46	11
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel you are ready	2.42	12

Trainees, as in the case of the apprentices, placed the greatest importance on the quality of the off-site instructors and the opportunities that the off-site learning environment offers to complement what trainees are learning, or not learning, in the workplace.

Trainees were asked to indicate whether each aspect listed was currently happening in their off-site learning environments. These data are presented in table 12.

A proportion of trainees report an absence of flexibility in terms of their learning agendas and the timing of their assessment. Although 27% of trainees reported that they did not believe that their off-site trainers/teachers were aware of current practices in the workplace, 89% thought they were still effective as instructors. It is also important to note that approximately one-fifth of trainees reported that the highly valued opportunities to practise skills learnt in the workplace or to learn skills which are not able to be developed in the workplace are absent from their off-site learning environments.

Table 12: Trainees' views on whether aspects that helped them to learn were currently happening in their off-site learning environments

Various aspects in the off-site learning environment	Importance	Currently happening in your off-site training?				Missing data
	Mean	Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
The off-the-job trainers/teachers are effective instructors	2.87	66	89.2	8	10.8	10
There are opportunities for you to practice skills that you are not learning in your workplace	2.80	59	77.6	17	22.4	8
There are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your on-site training	2.70	58	77.3	17	22.7	9
Teachers/trainers are interested about your future in the work force	2.71	65	83.3	13	16.7	6
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested in the off-site environment	2.69	59	77.6	17	22.4	8
There are opportunities for you to talk to your teachers/trainers about what you would like to learn	2.64	62	78.5	17	21.5	5
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed	2.63	64	84.2	12	15.8	8
Teachers/trainers take time to talk to you about your job	2.62	63	79.7	16	20.3	5
You have opportunities to talk with your teachers/trainers about what you are learning in your workplace	2.60	66	82.5	14	17.5	4
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who are learning with you	2.60	69	88.5	9	11.5	6
Teachers/trainers are aware and up to date with what is happening in the workplace	2.46	54	73.0	20	27.0	10
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel you are ready	2.42	54	71.1	22	28.9	8

Comparing aspects of the workplace environment experiences for trainees in 'workplace-only' and 'integrated' contracts of training

Cross-tabulations of type of contract of training with aspects of the workplace environment revealed statistical differences (using chi-square test) on five aspects. (Full statistical data can be found in appendix F.) Trainees in workplace-only contracts of training (where they do not go to a training provider external to the enterprise) rated the following aspects of greater importance in helping them to learn:

- your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience (X^2 (df = 2, N = 164) = 10.39, p = <0.01)
- you are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who work with you (X^2 (df = 2, N = 160) = 10.91, p = <0.01)
- trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job (X^2 (df = 2, N = 167) = 8.48, p = <0.05)

- your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace (X^2 (df = 2, N = 153) = 6.03, p = <0.05)
- you are challenged to come up with new and different ways of doing things in the workplace (X^2 (df = 2, N = 151) = 6.65, p = <0.05)

Despite the high rating of importance of these five and, indeed, all of the listed aspects of the workplace environment, the extent to which these aspects are currently happening in workplaces is not high (table 13). Between one-third and one-half of trainees report that the following aspects are currently not happening in their workplaces:

- employers/trainers organising work so that the trainee is able to work at their own pace (56%)
- people being selected especially to help the trainee learn at work (52%)
- being challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace (42%)
- trainers/employers showing an interest in the trainees' future in the workforce (40%)
- trainers/employers taking time to talk to the trainee about their job (37%)
- being able to have competence formally assessed at work (36%)
- being able to be formally assessed when trainees feel they are ready (36%)
- being provided with opportunities to talk with trainers/employers about what trainees' would like to learn (35%)
- being provided with time to practise the skills they are learning (34%)
- employers/trainers planning work that the trainee is able to work at a level that best fits with their level of experience (33%)

Table 13: Trainees in workplace-only contracts of training—rating of importance for each aspect and the frequency of each aspect in their workplace

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Rating of importance	Currently happening in their workplace?				Missing data
	Mean	Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	2.87	74	90.2	8	9.8	5
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	2.84	42	62.7	25	37.3	20
At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	2.83	57	68.7	26	31.3	4
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	2.82	54	66.7	27	33.3	6
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	2.82	64	79.0	17	21.0	6
The trainers in your workplace are effective instructors	2.82	57	71.3	23	28.8	7
You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-site training	2.80	28	43.1	37	56.9	22
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	2.80	60	73.2	22	26.8	5
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time	2.79	62	75.6	20	24.4	5

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Rating of importance	Currently happening in their workplace?				Missing data
	Mean	Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	2.79	70	83.3	14	16.7	3
There is time allowed for you to practise the skills you are learning in your workplace	2.77	54	65.9	28	34.1	5
Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	2.77	75	89.3	9	10.7	3
Your employer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	2.76	58	70.7	24	29.3	5
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while you are at work	2.74	53	63.9	30	36.1	4
There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	2.74	52	65.0	28	35.0	7
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	2.72	52	63.4	30	36.6	5
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	2.71	57	67.9	27	32.1	3
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	2.71	57	67.9	27	32.1	3
You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	2.68	80	97.6	2	2.4	5
You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	2.66	47	58.0	34	42.0	6
You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	2.66	77	89.5	9	10.5	1
Trainers/employers are interested in your future in the workforce	2.64	48	60.0	32	40.0	7
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	2.64	30	39.5	46	60.5	11
Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	2.64	34	43.6	44	56.4	9
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with people who work with you	2.63	58	71.6	23	28.4	6
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel ready	2.62	51	63.8	29	36.3	7
At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	2.61	38	48.1	41	51.9	8

Conclusion

Apprentices and trainees share many views in relation to the factors that are most helpful for their learning in both workplace and off-site learning environments. Within the workplace, both apprentices and trainees believe that quality relationships with their employers and trainers is an important factor in assisting them to learn. Opportunities to undertake meaningful work, time to practise skills and clearly articulated processes for assessment are also highly rated.

In reality, however, a significant number of apprentices and trainees reported that those aspects they believe to be important for their learning are absent from their workplaces. Many of the aspects that are not present reflect the continual challenge of juggling the demands of work with the needs of learners in the workplace.

Implications, conclusions and recommendations

In the first chapter of this report, the research objectives for this study were presented as follows:

- identify what different stakeholders in apprenticeships and traineeships expect apprentices and trainees to learn
- identify and analyse the different approaches to learning and assessment that can be undertaken by apprentices and trainees as part of their contracts of training
- evaluate the extent to which these different approaches to learning and assessment contribute to the learning goals and needs of apprentices and trainees
- evaluate areas where improvements might be made to learning and assessment practices and the strategies and interventions that are required to bring about change

Each of these was further elaborated into a number of research questions. Stakeholders' expectations for apprenticeships and traineeships have been documented. The learning and assessment perspectives and experiences of apprentices and trainees within twenty case study sites and in a national sample from two occupational areas have been analysed in some detail. This final section now summarises these findings and focusses on their implications. Conclusions based on the data are presented and a number of recommendations for improvements to learning and assessment practices are made for the consideration of policy-makers, enterprises and training providers.

Learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships

Current policy initiatives in the form of *New Apprenticeships* have resulted in the merging of apprenticeships and traineeships under a unified framework. Whilst some literature points to some distinct differences between these two forms of entry-level training (WADOT 1998, Ray 2001), in practice, these are not clearly articulated. Within the context of this study, respondents viewed both apprenticeships and traineeships as serving objectives relating to, first, entry into the labour market and, second, provision of training pathways leading to nationally recognised qualifications.

Expectations

These twin agendas give rise to a range of expectations for learning and assessment practices within apprenticeships and traineeships. All respondents in this study expected that essential learning for apprentices and trainees would include both work-based skills and knowledge, along with a range of 'people skills', the development of a work ethic and a range of attributes such as flexibility and the ability to learn. This latter attribute was particularly valued by apprentices and trainees who noted that learning needed to be an essential component of their working lives if they were to keep pace with constant change in their industry.

There were notable differences between stakeholders on the extent to which learning should focus on the development of generic skills and the degree to which multiskilling

and the development of industry-wide knowledge should be an outcome of apprenticeships and traineeships. These differences of opinion reflect the tensions inherent in a national training system where the national imperatives of transferability and national recognition sometimes compete with industry and enterprise needs and expectations. There was also some disagreement about the degree to which learning in apprenticeships and traineeships should be future-orientated in order to meet career and promotional aspirations of employees. In many respects these tensions are not new. However, ensuring the balance does not tip too far in one direction is essential if apprenticeships and traineeships are to be valued as learning pathways by both young people/workers and employers as a valuable contributor to increasing the skill base within enterprises.

The expectations articulated by stakeholders, apprentices and trainees require that learning and assessment processes deliver a range of outcomes. Learning processes need to promote opportunities for the development of work-related and generic skills in a purposive manner that optimises relevance to both employers and apprentices/trainees. The use of processes such as RPL and tailoring learning through the use of individualised training plans and negotiation of learning outcomes with apprentices and trainees were seen as critical to the learning process. Assessment is a means of providing a 'guarantee' that the specified competencies have been achieved. Assurances of the quality of assessment processes were highly valued by apprentices and trainees who expressed a strong desire for qualifications that would have credibility and currency within the wider community. Employers viewed assessment as a critical source of information upon which they could base future decisions relating to promotion and ongoing training.

Different approaches

The data collected for this study indicate that a range of different approaches to learning and assessment are currently in use. These approaches varied along a number of continua, including:

- the mix of learning and assessment undertaken either during the course of normal work or undertaken away from work
- the degree of formality in the learning and assessment processes
- the extent to which learning and assessment was undertaken by qualified trainers, especially designated workers, or was left to those workers who happened to be working with the apprentices and trainees

The three main ways of organising learning and assessment were:

- learning and assessment on the job *and* in off-site environments geographically removed from the workplace (for example, a TAFE institute or private provider). This approach is an example of the 'integrated' model of training that is very prevalent in apprenticeships, especially those associated with traditional trade areas. In this model, formal assessment is often confined to the off-site environment
- learning on the job with the withdrawal of apprentices/trainees from normal work duties to attend training provided in another location within the same enterprise. In some cases, 'formalised' learning opportunities in the form of classes could be replaced with specific amounts of time set aside during working hours for learners to work through self-paced modules or other training materials. Assessment could be undertaken either within or away from the work site
- approaches which used day-to-day work as the sole site for learning

This study supports existing research that emphasises the value of the workplace as a learning environment (Billett 1993; Candy & Matthews 1998; Seagraves & Osborne 1997). The study also reinforces and extends the work of Van de Krogt (1998) and Poell, Van der Krogt and Wildereersch (1998) in demonstrating the pervasiveness and value of informal training in the workplace in the development of apprentices and trainees. Informal training, often inextricably woven into the fabric of normal work, made a significant contribution to

the development of apprentices' skills and knowledge. It provided opportunities for apprentices and trainees to apply their learning in authentic situations and to develop their own ways of working. The willing work colleague or 'buddy', on hand to answer questions and to guide and show the apprentice/trainee how to perform tasks, was highlighted as critical to the success of learning. Similarly, opportunities to receive 'informal' feedback and to have mistakes corrected were highly valued. This study illustrates that the informal learning undertaken by apprentices and trainees is shaped by the work structures, processes and cultures established in enterprises. It also reaffirms the importance of appropriate skill development for those people designated to work with trainees and apprentices (Harris et al. 1998; Harris, Simons & Bone 2000).

As reported in previous studies (Cooney 1993; Harris et al. 1998), formal learning in the form of classes or workshops provides apprentices and trainees with valuable opportunities to extend their learning and to focus on the more 'theoretical' aspects of their occupation. The slower pace of off-site environments provided extra time to refine and consolidate skills already learnt or to develop those skills that could not be learned in the workplace. Opportunities to network and learn from peers, particularly for those apprentices and trainees employed in small enterprises or in occupations where they worked largely on their own, were highly valued for their potential to add breadth and depth to the learning process.

Within both on- and off-the-job learning environments, a variety of learning strategies was apparent. Respondents noted that strategies that support the 'adult' character of learners, use discussion and interaction between learners and teachers/trainers and are responsive to learning needs and styles are most beneficial. Self-paced modules that could be completed either in the learner's own time or during specified times during working hours are also widely used.

Approaches to assessment included those that rely solely on summative assessment tasks and those that combine opportunities for formative and summative assessment. The off-site environment is seemingly the most common site for assessment, though several respondents were able to provide instances where real and simulated environments were used in integrated assessment approaches. Demonstration of competence via performance and the use of pen and paper tests were common assessment strategies. Assessment in the workplace often adopted a more holistic perspective with work functions (rather than specific tasks) being used as the focus for assessment. Informal assessment, often incorporated into the normal routine, was noted as a critical component in developing the competence of apprentices and trainees.

Evaluating approaches to learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships

Evidence to evaluate current approaches to learning and assessment was collected from 20 case sites and a national survey of a sample of apprentices and trainees in the automotive and hospitality industries. Whilst the process of learning is a very individualised and complex process, the apprentices and trainees were able to provide valuable insights into the aspects of the on- and off-the-job environments that facilitated learning and assisted in assessing their competence in meaningful and realistic ways.

Apprentices and trainees reported an overall high level of satisfaction with their learning and assessment processes. Both the case studies and the survey indicate that many enterprises and RTOs are working well to deliver quality learning and assessment processes that are assisting apprentices and trainees to meet their learning goals and needs. There are a number of examples from the case studies of 'good practice' where enterprises either in their own right or in partnership with an RTO have established a successful working arrangement that benefits both enterprise and learners. Trainers, teachers and employers demonstrate a high level of commitment to their respective roles, and

assessment and learning is being undertaken to the required standards. These findings reinforce data reported in earlier studies that have focussed on specific States' apprenticeship and traineeship systems (WADOT 1998; Schofield 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Smith 1999).

At the same time, the case studies and survey also highlight some significant gaps and challenges which potentially could undermine the quality of apprenticeships and traineeships. Whilst specific evidence of RTOs failing to provide learning and assessment services and employers not meeting their responsibilities were limited, there is enough evidence to suggest that there is significant room for improvement in both learning and assessment practices.

The workplace as a learning environment

Apprentices and trainees value the workplace for the opportunities it provides to learn skills and knowledge that are directly relevant to their daily work. Aspects of the workplace that most assist apprentices in their learning and assessment include:

- effective workplace instructors
- clearly articulated processes for assessment
- quality relationships between apprentices and their work colleagues
- opportunities to undertake work which increases in complexity over time and supports apprentices to work autonomously

These aspects emphasise the important role that workplace trainers and employers have in fostering an environment that is conducive to learning within the workplace by actively cultivating relationships with and between workers. Good communication is the main vehicle and the primary mechanism through which a supportive learning climate is fostered. Employers and trainers in the workplace also have a critical role to play in manipulating the flow, content and structure of work to provide apprentices and trainees with access to the type of work that will promote knowledge and skill development.

The case studies highlighted the value of informal assessment that can occur as part of the daily work routine to apprentices' and trainees' learning. Positive comments from supervisors and 'tips and hints' about ideas for improvement support and encourage learning.

Formal assessment in the workplace was often, but not always, a co-operative endeavour between the apprentice/trainee and their trainers/employers. In some instances, apprentices and trainees did not appear to have input into the timing of their assessments and on other occasions there could be considerable gaps between the learning and assessment processes. There was also evidence to suggest that while some enterprises and providers worked hard to develop assessment practices that were customised to the needs of the enterprise and holistic in their orientation, other assessment practices amounted to little more than the direct translation of assessment practices used in off-site environments to the workplace.

Despite the high value placed on a range of aspects of the on-site learning environment, both the case studies and the survey revealed that apprentices and trainees believed there was room for improvement. Case study respondents noted that some of their on-site trainers lacked the motivation and skills required to facilitate learning effectively. Integrating the different approaches and methods taught by different trainers/teachers also posed some challenges for apprentices and trainees, suggesting that the process of integrating learning from different learning environments is left largely to the apprentice or trainee. Boredom, due to the inability to tackle new and more complex tasks over time, often hindered apprentices' and trainees' learning. This was particularly problematic for apprentices and trainees who were employed in very small enterprises which do not undertake a variety of work or in enterprises where employers were unwilling to risk

asking inexperienced workers to tackle jobs which needed 'the best person for the job'. The lack of informal and formal assessment and the abilities of some workplace assessors were also noted as issues by some apprentices and trainees.

While it was not a significant feature of the case studies, there were a number of instances where the quality of services provided by RTOs was questioned. There is one documented case where an RTO failed to provide learning and assessment plans and services to the trainees. In several traineeships, employers and trainees expressed concern about the quality and timeliness of services from RTOs.

Data from the survey of apprentices and trainees employed in the automotive and hospitality industries supported the findings of the case studies. Apprentices pointed to a number of conditions that they rate as important in supporting their learning but are currently not as prevalent in their workplaces as they might be. The following conditions were absent from between one-third to one-half of workplaces:

- opportunities to work on their own
- being given feedback and encouragement about their work performance
- being able to be formally assessed when they are ready
- opportunities to practise their skills
- being able to attend classes and workshops that count towards their qualification
- time to talk to employers about their job
- employer's interest in their future in the workforce

Trainees reported similar workplace conditions in up to one-quarter of their workplaces. They also reported that in just under one-half of workplaces trainees are not provided with opportunities to work on their own, nor are there specially designated people to assist them with their learning. Half of the trainees report that their employer does not organise work so that the trainee is able to work at their own pace.

While many of these workplace conditions reflect the tensions inherent in balancing the needs of apprentices and trainees as learners with the needs of the enterprise to 'get the job done', they nonetheless signpost aspects which could be enhanced.

In cases where trainees and apprentices were in contracts of training that involved no training outside of the enterprise (that is, workplace-only contracts), greater emphasis was placed on:

- the capacity of workplace trainers and employers to provide learning experiences which promote meaningful learning
- the development of high quality relationships with their employers/trainers

One-third of apprentices in these workplace-only contracts of training reported that the relationship they have with their employer does not provide opportunities for them to talk about their job or any issues or concerns they may have in relation to their work. More than one-quarter of the apprentices indicated that they were unaware of what is required of them when they are formally assessed. One-half of apprentices recorded a gap between the importance they placed on being assessed when they felt ready and the reality of workplace assessment practices which do not take this into account.

In many respects, the situation of trainees employed in workplace-only contracts of training is of greater concern. Not only are there higher numbers represented in the survey, the gap they report between aspects of the workplace that are important to their learning and the reality of their workplaces is more substantial. These findings support the concerns raised by Schofield (1999a, 1999b, 2000) and Smith (1999) with regard to the quality of training arrangements which rely solely on the enterprise to provide all the training for apprentices

and trainees. Between one-third and one-half of trainees responding to the survey reported that the following aspects are currently not happening in their workplaces:

- trainers/employers taking time to talk to the trainee about their job
- employers/trainers organising work so that the trainee is able to work at their own pace
- employers/trainers planning work that the trainee is able to work at a level that best fits with their level of experience
- being challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace
- people being selected especially to help the trainee learn at work
- being able to be formally assessed when trainees feel they are ready
- trainers/employers showing an interest in the trainees' future in the workforce
- being provided with opportunities to talk with trainers/employers about what trainees' would like to learn
- being able to have competence formally assessed at work
- being provided with time to practice the skills they are learning

The off-site learning environment

As with the workplace environment, both the case studies and the survey results generally point to high levels of satisfaction with many aspects of the off-site learning environment for both apprentices and trainees. The off-site learning environment provides opportunities to learn the theory that underpins their workplace practice. It is here that 'depth' in learning is promoted, with a particular emphasis on industry-wide knowledge.

The off-site environment also offers apprentices and trainees time away from the pressures of work to discuss their learning and work with other trainers/teachers and, just as importantly, their peers. The case studies highlight the importance of these often more informal contacts with other learners and the valuable role they play in expanding apprentices' and trainees' knowledge of what happens in other enterprises, thus also expanding the breadth of their knowledge.

The case studies and the survey suggest that a large amount of assessment activity still occurs in off-site environments. Respondents noted the value of assessors independent from the workplace in providing what was perceived to be more 'objective' judgements of their competence.

Results of the survey point to the high ratings of importance given to a range of aspects within the off-site learning environment by both apprentices and trainees. The data reinforce the important contribution that off-site environments can potentially make to apprentices' and trainees' learning, particularly in relation to aspects such as:

- time to learn and practise skills that are not being learnt in the workplace
- time to talk about their job with others (teachers *and* peers)
- opportunities to have greater input into what they might learn

However, apprentices and trainees also pointed to areas that they believed were open for some improvement. Apprentices and trainees considered that their off-site teachers/trainers were not as up to date with current work practices as they would like them to be. Input into what they would like to learn and the timing of their assessments is also not happening as often as they would like.

Towards quality learning and assessment: Partnerships and balance

One of the striking features of the data collected during this study is the diversity of approaches that exist in learning and assessment practices for apprentices and trainees. This has been one of the key catchwords throughout much of the recent reform activity within the VET sector. Diversity has promoted the development of innovative approaches to employment-based, structured training that has delivered significant benefits to employers, apprentices and trainees.

Within this environment, however, not all RTOs and enterprises are able to deal with the complexities and challenges offered to them. This study has highlighted that all workplaces and off-site environments are not equal in terms of the quality of learning and assessment they can provide. There are inherent tensions between the needs of enterprises and the needs of apprentices and trainees. Tensions exist on the degree to which structured training should focus on industry or enterprise-specific knowledge and skills. Real differences exist between enterprises in terms of the learning cultures and the resources that they are able to provide to support learning and assessment. This study is a powerful reminder of the need to think realistically about the 'life worlds' of the apprentice and trainee and the challenges faced by employers, trainers and RTOs in creating learning and assessment systems that are of high quality.

Achieving quality learning and assessment system for apprentices and trainees appears to revolve around two foci:

- monitoring the *balance* between the competing tensions that are inherent in employment-based, structured training arrangements—that is, between the organisational needs of the enterprise and the learning needs of the apprentices and trainees
- developing and sustaining effective *partnerships* between the apprentice/trainee, the employer and the training provider

Maintaining a fair balance would appear to involve significant efforts on the part of employers, trainers and other key stakeholders in being able to mine the potential opportunities that exist within workplaces. The everyday work of an enterprise is the primary (and in some cases, the only) developmental pathway for apprentices and trainees. Work practices and relationships that can potentially facilitate learning need to be promoted. Skills of employers and those significant others in the workplace who are given the responsibility to work with and support apprentices and trainees need to be developed further. A learning culture (that is, the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that reside in an enterprise) to support the development of apprentices and trainees cannot be imposed on an enterprise. Institutionally based education and training practices need to be adapted and shaped to fit with the workplace learning culture. Enterprises need to be provided with information, resources and support to assist them to build a learning culture that will provide fair and equitable attention to the needs of both the learners and the enterprise.

The promotion of learning cultures is especially pressing in the context of enterprises where training for apprentices and trainees does not include any opportunities for learning or assessment outside of the enterprise. Whilst many apprentices and trainees are well satisfied with the learning and assessment experiences afforded to them by these forms of training, significant numbers of apprentices and particularly trainees noted the absence of a range of aspects from their workplaces that they believed to be important for learning. Many of these related to particular features which apprentices and trainees in off-site environments believe to be important to their learning (such as time to talk about their work, and to practise their skills). This represents a significant gap that needs to be addressed.

The other aspect in need of attention is the development of partnerships. In integrated models of training in particular, successful learning and assessment for apprentices and

trainees rely heavily on the strength and effectiveness of the partnership developed between the trainee/apprentice, the employer (who could potentially be a group training scheme) and the training provider. Quality partnerships build an environment where effective learning and assessment can take place. Such learning environments are characterised by apprentices and trainees participating in learning processes that may span different environments but which work in concert to ensure the development of vocational knowledge and skills that are relevant to the immediate work context. In addition, these learning experiences equip apprentices and trainees with skills and competencies to participate in ongoing learning and development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for improvements to learning and assessment practices for apprenticeships and traineeships emerge from the findings of this study. They are offered for the consideration of policy-makers, enterprises and training providers. Given the specific focus of this study on learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships, these recommendations naturally cluster in two main areas—implementation of contracts of training and capacity-building of those who help apprentices and trainees learn.

Implementation of contracts of training

1. Where contracts of training do not require attendance at a training venue external to an enterprise, every effort should be made to ensure that training plans are used to fully document the learning and assessment processes for trainees and apprentices. These plans should clearly outline the responsibilities of all parties (employer, external training organisation (where appropriate), workplace trainers/'buddies'/mentors and apprentice/trainee).

2. Auditing processes should pay direct attention to, and collect evidence on, the quality of these training plans and the manner in which they are being implemented in apprenticeships and traineeships.

3. Efforts to promote the value of withdrawal of apprentices and trainees from routine work should be explored. Where possible all contracts of training should include some provision for withdrawal from routine work to provide apprentices and trainees with opportunities for learning experiences that will ensure the development of a broad and deep knowledge and skill base that is commensurate with the level of their training qualification, and that will enable interaction with learning peers.

4. Specific strategies that support apprentices and trainees in the process of integrating learning from on- and off-site environments should be implemented. These could include strategies that promote increased communication between sites to minimise overlap and duplication.

5. Assessment practices that provide greater opportunities for apprentices and trainees to have input into the assessment process, particularly the timing of assessment, should be promoted and implemented.

6. Processes that stimulate and support the development and sharing of innovative approaches to:
   - ❖ integrating learning from on- and off-the-job sites
   - ❖ quality resources for learning in the workplace (including those that are exemplars of resources designed to assist learners with specific needs or culturally appropriate for indigenous trainees and apprentices)
   - ❖ holistic work-based assessment practices

   should be established, funded and widely promoted among RTOs and enterprises.

Capacity-building of those who help apprentices and trainees learn

7. Appropriate training and resources should be provided to workplace trainers and assessors, especially those who are involved in helping the 'informal', day-to-day learning of apprentices and trainees. The resources and training should provide information and skill development on a range of issues, including communication skills, how to organise work structure, content and processes to meet learning outcomes and how to provide effective and timely feedback on work performance to apprentices and trainees.

8. Information and resources that specifically focus on the importance of learning through work and how appropriate workplace structures, processes and relationships can be developed to support the learning of apprentices and trainees should be developed for inclusion in the non-endorsed components of Training Packages.

9. Appropriate training and resources should be provided to staff, who are located in RTOs and undertake contracted work within enterprises, to facilitate their understanding of how existing workplace learning cultures, work practices and relationships can be developed, adapted and used to support the learning of apprentices and trainees.

10. Professional development opportunities should be provided to teachers and trainers employed in RTOs to ensure that they maintain up-to-date knowledge of current work practices within their occupational areas.

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Appendix A

Focus groups protocol

Three main areas of discussion

a) To gain expert opinion relating to the research questions
b) To use (a) to help us prepare the case study and questionnaire protocols
c) To get ideas for case study sites and the two qualifications to use for the survey

What do apprentices and trainees learn?

- What are the purposes of apprenticeships and traineeships?
- What do different stakeholders expect apprentices and trainees to learn during their contact of training?
- How do, and should, these expectations impact on the approaches to learning and assessment?

Processes of learning and training

- What different approaches to learning and assessment are there (different delivery modes etc.) and do these vary with factors such as industry, occupation, and so on?
- Specifically- What are the different things the apprentices/trainees learn from their on- and off-the-job training? What about totally on-the-job traineeships and (if any) apprenticeships? Has *User Choice* impacted on learning and assessment? Has flexible delivery had any impact or is it likely to?
- How are training packages impacting on learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships, and how might they impact in the future?

What about the trainers?

- Who trains apprentices and trainees on and off the job? What sort of qualifications and skills do and should they have?

Adult traineeships

- Do adult traineeships, especially the large-scale on-the-job traineeships such as food processing, need to be treated separately or differently in the research?

Identifying and replicating good practice

- What approaches to learning and assessment are most and least successful?
- Can successful approaches be transferred from certain industries/contracts to others? What barriers exist and how might they be overcome?

Appendix B

Case study protocols

Apprentices and trainees

Overview/background

1. How long have you been an apprentice/trainee?
2. Where have you been working during that time?
3. Who have you been working with?
4. Have you been going to/been to TAFE, separate classes at the workplace, group training company (GTC), other off-training provider?

Learning and assessment at work

5. What sorts of things have you learnt while you have been at work?
6. What was the experience of learning at work like? What helps learning? What hinders?
7. How many people have you been working with during your contract of training (especially those people responsible for training you)? How do these people help or hinder your learning?
8. Have you been assessed on your performance in your workplace? (Note: distinguish between informal assessment/monitoring of work performance and assessment of competence which counts towards qualification)

- What have you been assessed on?
- How was the experience of assessment for you? What helped the process? What hindered the process?

9. What sorts of work do you do at work? How does this change over time?
10. Are you given opportunities to work on your own? How is your work checked when this occurs?

Learning and assessment in off-the-job sites

11. What sorts of things have you learnt at off-the-job training (TAFE, GTC, other provider)?
12. How is this learning different from learning on the job?
13. What sorts of things have you learnt at work but off the regular job?
14. How is this learning different from learning on the job and off the job?
15. Has your learning been assessed during your off-site training?

- What have you been assessed on?
- How was the experience of assessment for you? What helped the process? What hindered the process?

General evaluation of apprenticeship/traineeship

16. What support for your learning is provided in the different modes of learning and how do you rate them as being successful for you?
17. Where and how have you learnt about the key competencies?
18. What is the best thing about being an apprentice/trainee?
19. What changes could be made to help you get more out of your time as an apprentice/trainee?
20. What plans do you have for further study after you have completed your apprenticeship/traineeship?
21. Any other comments?

Supervisors/trainers

Overview/background

1. How many apprentices/trainees are you currently employing?
2. How did you come to have apprentices/trainees working in you enterprise?

Apprentices'/trainees' learning and assessment

3. From your perspective, what is the purpose of the training the apprentices and trainees are undertaking?
4. How much of it should be undertaken on the job?
5. How much should be taken in various modes of off-the job training (i.e. with a training provider, at workshops/seminars on the job but away from work)?
6. How satisfied are you with the results?
7. Are you confident that the key competencies are being achieved?
8. What improvements could be made to the current arrangements?

(If supervisor/employer is also carrying out the workplace trainer role, go to questions under the next category.)

Training/facilitating learning and assessment of apprentices/trainees

9. What is you role in the training of apprentices/trainees?
10. How many are you responsible for?
11. When you have to help an apprentice/trainee how to learn something, what do you do?
12. What sort of guidance and help do you provide for apprentices/trainees?
13. When do you leave the apprentices/trainees to work on their own?
14. How do you monitor their performance?
15. Do you encourage apprentices/trainees to draw on their experiences from off-the-job training? How, if you do? Is this deliberate or does it happen by chance?
16. Do the apprentices/trainees undertake learning in the workplace but outside the work routines? If so describe the learning that takes place in this mode?
17. Do you test apprentices/trainees performance in the workplace? How do you go about this task?
18. Do you assess to competency standards? If not, who is responsible for assessing the apprentices/trainees competency?
19. How often do you have contact with off-the-job training providers? What is the purpose of this contact?
20. How do you rate its effectiveness in contributing to apprentices'/trainees' learning?
21. How does your learning environment contribute to apprentice/trainee development of key competencies?

22. After an apprentice/trainee has completed their contract of training what do you think should be their next steps in terms of their job? How do you encourage trainees/apprentices to think beyond their contract of training onto these next steps?
23. What improvements could be made to the learning and assessment process for apprentices/trainees?

Registered training organisations/group training company managers

Overview/background

1. How many apprentices/trainees are you providing education and training for?
2. In relation to the site under consideration, for how long have you been involved in carrying out these services?

Apprentices'/trainees' learning and assessment

3. What is the purpose of the off-the-job component the apprentices/trainees undertake?
4. How does this fit in with the on-the-job components of their training?

Training/facilitating learning and assessment of apprentices/trainees

5. How do you approach the task of facilitating the apprentices'/trainees' learning?
6. What sorts of guidance and help do you provide the apprentices/trainees?
7. Do you leave the apprentices/trainees to work on their own?
8. If so, how do you monitor their performance during this time?
9. How do you draw on the work experiences of the apprentices/trainees?
10. Do you assess the apprentices/trainees performance in the workplace/off-the job? How do you go about this?
11. How does the training undertaken by the apprentices/trainees on the job help them in the education and learning with you?
12. How much contact do you have with the workplace trainers/other trainers who work with the apprentices/trainees? What is its purpose and frequency?
13. How does your learning environment contribute to the apprentices'/trainees' development of the key competencies?
14. After an apprentice/trainee has completed their contract of training what do you think should be their next steps in terms of their job? How do you encourage trainees/apprentices to think beyond their contract of training onto these next steps?
15. What improvements could be made to the learning and assessment processes for apprentices/trainees?

Appendix C

Case study profiles

This appendix describes the 20 case studies in this study. They covered a number of industries, sites and modes of learning and assessment. All States and Territories of Australia (except Western Australia) as well as regional and capital city locations were represented.

The case studies were selected from the following industry areas:

- automotive
- community services and health
- construction
- finance
- IT & telecommunications
- manufacturing and engineering
- property services
- rural/fisheries/forestry
- wholesale/retail
- education

Automotive industry

Two case studies were selected from the automotive industry. The first site had a New Apprentice who was involved in a one-year contract of training as part of a school-based apprenticeship and has since become a full-time apprentice, while the second site had an apprentice who was on a four-year contract of training employed through a group training scheme.

The employer from the first site regularly takes students from the secondary school on work experience placements. One of the students showed interest in the area and was offered a school-based apprenticeship. At the time, the employer was unable to afford to employ a full-time apprentice but was willing and able to employ a school-based apprentice.

During this time, the apprentice attended secondary school for three days, the off-the-job training (a TAFE institute) for one day and the employer for one day per week. The apprentice successfully completed the one-year course and was offered a full-time apprenticeship with the employer. The apprentice now attends off-the-job training one day per week (at a TAFE institute) and at the employer for the remaining four days per week.

On-the-job training was conducted by the owner and other co-workers. The method of on-the-job assessment was unclear during the research. Representatives from TAFE did not visit the apprentice and workplace assessment was not recorded. The employer presumed the assessment was being conducted by the off-the-job trainer but there was no formal

arrangement in place. The apprentice was not currently keeping a logbook or similar to record his on-the-job work. Off-the-job training and assessment was conducted by the TAFE institute. The employer regularly received copies of the apprentice's results from his off-the-job trainer.

The second site employed four apprentices through a GTC and two apprentices 'of it's own'. This case study focussed on the apprentices employed by the GTC.

The GTC had a field officer whose job was to oversee the progress of 90 apprentices. He made regular but unannounced visits to the work site, where he would have informal 'chats' with each apprentice, check log books to ascertain whether all competencies were being addressed and spoke to the workplace supervisor about each apprentice's behaviour and performance. The GTC was able to move the apprentice to different employers according to the needs of the employer or the apprentice.

The apprentices were trained on the job by a qualified mechanic and assessed by a workplace assessor from the GTC. Off-the-job training and assessment was conducted by a local TAFE.

Community services and health

One case study site was selected in the community services and health industry area. The site is providing services to the aged and people with a disability. Up until 1996, the local council provided these services. From 1996, as a result of compulsory competitive tendering, the services are now provided on a contract basis.

The service provider introduced a four-day induction program for new staff. This was a non-accredited program with an emphasis on health and safety issues. New employees were then supported by a buddy system involving a senior staff member and a manual.

Traineeships were introduced in 1999 when the Certificate III in Health and Community Services became mandatory for all staff. Employees, many of whom were long standing, that were eligible to become trainees were offered an opportunity to complete the one-year traineeship.

Individual training programs were worked out, which, given the knowledge and experience of many of these workers, meant that RPL was very important. Trainees completed those modules for which they had not been given RPL. This training was provided off site by a local TAFE.

Off-the-job learning covered the underpinning knowledge of the industry and offered the trainee opportunities to discuss issues with other workers. Off-the-job assessment was completed as written assignments such as a research project or case studies. The assignments were consistent with the underpinning knowledge required to complete the job of an aged or disability care worker.

On-the-job experience was seen as a legitimate part of the training program but was largely unsupervised. Each trainee could expect a health and safety officer (who doesn't have workplace training or assessor qualifications) to observe their activities in the workplace on two or three occasions per year. These visits have a health and safety focus and were seen as an opportunity for the trainee to refresh their thoughts and reaffirm their work practices and to provide peer support. There was no formal feedback from these visits to the accredited program of training provided by the RTO.

There was little other on-the-job training or assessment as the workers work alone with very little contact with other workers.

Construction

The case study chosen in this industry was a large project builder who acts as a host employer for apprentices employed by a GTC. The builder had apprentices in the areas of framing and bricklaying.

The builder used for the case study had building supervisors and area construction managers. The building supervisors controlled the hiring and firing of sub-contractors and visited the worksites every two days. Any on-site difficulties experienced by the apprentices were picked up by the building supervisor, the area construction manager or the GTC's field officer.

The GTC had three field officers whose roles were to liaise with the host employers, the apprentices and the off-the-job trainers. The field officers also had a role in monitoring OH&S standards at building sites. During the visits the field officers would observe the apprentices and their working environment. If the environment was unsuitable or unsafe, or if the host employer was not providing the appropriate learning opportunities or not teaching the apprentices to work safely, the field officer would recommend that the apprentices be moved to an alternative employer.

On-the-job training was provided by relevant tradespeople. The GTC was able to move the apprentices around to different subcontractors so the apprentices could widen their experiences and increase their skill level. Off-the-job training and assessment was conducted by TAFE. Apprentices attended TAFE one day per week. The field officers regularly liaised with the TAFE instructors and received reports about the progress of the apprentices. These reports were also forwarded to the host employer.

Except in large building enterprises, formal workplace assessment have not yet been introduced widely in this particular State's building industry, so there was no formal assessment conducted on the job at this site.

Finance industry

One site was chosen from the finance industry. The employer was a credit agency employing a school-based trainee who was completing Year 12 and a Certificate II in Office Administration. The trainee attended secondary school three days per week and one day per week at the employer and the off-the-job trainer.

The secondary school had a vocation education co-ordinator who arranged and supervised *New Apprenticeship* placements. He also maintained contact with employers or host employers to monitor the student's progress.

A designated trainer and the trainee's co-workers provided training on the job. On-the-job assessment was performed by the RTO. The RTO also visited the trainee regularly in order to check the trainee's logbooks and consult with her workplace supervisor and trainer about her performance and achievement of competencies and, where appropriate, verify and endorse competency outcomes. The trainee has worked alongside an experienced staff member fairly constantly for most of her 11 months in the job. It is only recently that she has been assigned tasks on which to work independently.

The off-the-job trainer, TAFE, provided training and assessment in areas such as Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare and Communication modules and also provided the background and underpinning knowledge of the industry. This then worked in a complementary way with the trainee's workplace experience and training to enable the trainee to achieve the required competencies.

The off-the-job training was assessed through exams and workbooks. She was required to achieve 100% in her exams or else she must re-sit at a later date.

At the completion of Year 12, the trainee will move into a full-time traineeship with the employer. At this point the trainee would expect to spend four days on the job and one day in off-the-job training.

IT and telecommunications industry

Two case studies were chosen from the IT and Telecommunication industry—a telephone call centre and an industrial screen printer.

At the call centre, staff were employed initially as call centre staff and then offered the opportunity to become trainees. On-the-job training was provided through a process of:

- Initial orientation and induction which was conducted by the call centre's training co-ordinator and TAFE staff.
- The trainee would then 'sit on in' some calls with experienced call centre staff.
- After a short period, approximately two or three days, the trainee would then take some calls with their 'buddy' sitting next to them and listening to the calls. The buddy would provide any extra training that may be required—for example, correct terminology.
- As the trainee became more confident the buddy would leave the trainee to take calls independently but be close by if the trainee needed further assistance.
- During the 12 months of the traineeship, trainees were given time 'off the phones' to complete written assessments in the call centre's training room.
- A peer support person and the team leader provided informal on-the-job learning and assessment. The team leader continually monitored the trainee's calls. The team leader was required to listen to at least four calls of each of his or her team members per month. If needed, further instruction would be given either verbally or written to the trainee. Written reminders may be given to the trainee, which can be placed next to their computer screen—for example, how to close a call or ask the client about a new promotion. Weekly team meetings were held where issues and problems were discussed; during these meetings trainees were also able to offer feedback on their team leader.
- The TAFE staff conducted the formal on-the-job assessment. This occurred regularly and involved the staff listening to four of the trainee's calls. At the completion of the calls, written and verbal feedback were given on the trainee's performance. If the trainee achieves the competencies they are awarded a Certificate II in Communications (Call Centres).
- As trainees became more confident and competent in their tasks they could ask, or were asked, to become buddies or peer supports.

When the trainee has completed the requirements of Certificate II, they can opt to complete Certificate III—this is a prerequisite to becoming a team leader. Certificate III is offered by TAFE in a self-paced learning package. The trainees would be assessed both on the job and through written assignments which are submitted to TAFE staff.

Completion of Certificates II and III is part of a two-year career pathway offered by the call centre.

If staff are interested in completing further qualifications, for example frontline management courses, the call centre would subsidise the cost of the course. The course must be seen to be the 'next logical step' in the progression of the staff member.

The screen-printing site had two apprentices who have recently completed their traineeships and have now begun full-time apprenticeships. The employees were initially employed on a three-month probationary period and then offered a traineeship. As they have only recently begun their apprenticeship, this case study focussed on their learning and assessment as trainees.

The on- and off-the-job training was jointly co-ordinated by a private RTO and on-site human resource staff. The RTO had customised the competency standards to reflect the specific work practices in place at the organisation and developed individual training plans for the trainees, based on the acquisition of the customised competency standards. This plan also served as a record of training and achievement.

The RTO and employer worked closely together, with the RTO acting as a mentor to the organisation's workplace trainers and assessors and to ensure the trainees progressed and achieved the competencies. The RTO regularly visited the organisation (usually fortnightly) to check the trainees' progress. The printer, who has undergone Workplace Assessor and Trainer training, conducts training and assessment; however, co-workers also provided guidance and assistance when required. On-the-job training took place at the workplace including in the on-site training room where operational and other training manuals were available. The printer conducted this training. The RTO co-ordinated any training that was required off the job. An example of this was training on equipment or exposure to work practices not available on the job at the worksite.

On-the-job assessment, conducted by the printer, was a combination of practical and written assessment. The assessment occurred when the trainee decided he or she was ready to be assessed. Time was given to the trainees during the day, including access to the training room to complete written work—for example, their logbooks.

Manufacturing and engineering

Five sites were chosen from the manufacturing and engineering industry:

- an industrial manufacturing company
- an RTO specialising in manufacturing and engineering
- an aluminium manufacturer
- an oil refinery
- a specialist metal fabricator

The industrial manufacturing company site had three divisions at three different work sites. Two of these divisions took on apprentices, in the mechanical and electrical trades, with the third cited as likely to do so in the near future. The company had a long history of employing apprentices. The company's training division is an RTO and it provided most of the training for the employees.

The company had an established syllabus that was tied to the metal competency standards. Through this process they were able to take a mechanical tradesperson from the start to the completion of his or her trade. An electrical tradesperson would begin their trade in the same manner as a mechanical tradesperson but would then move into the electrical area. The company was unable to provide all the training required to train an electrical fitter and used another private provider to provide the training necessary to complete the apprenticeship.

The training division had an Apprentice Training Centre (ATC) which is an off-the-job training site situated on the premises of one of its divisions. A manager and training co-ordinator managed the ATC. The ATC had a study area with appropriate resource books that apprentices would use.

Apprentices spent the first eight months of their apprenticeship in the ATC and in later years apprentices may return to the ATC to complete certain competencies as required. Apprentices otherwise undertook their training on the job through rotation through the three divisions. No other off-the-job training was conducted through the period of the apprenticeship with the exception of obtaining a forklift licence.

After leaving the ATC, the apprentices spent ten months in one division, learning in depth about the people and departments within that division. On-the-job training was undertaken

under a supervisor with the involvement of the relevant tradespeople. The apprentices were then rotated through the other divisions, as well as through the other parts of the company such as design, production and the laboratory.

Completion of the competencies was managed through the completion by the apprentice of a logbook in which satisfactory completion of competencies were noted. The system was self-paced and self-managed, with apprentices able to apply at any time for assessment of the competencies. Time was allocated during the day for the apprentice to complete the logbook.

The next site, the RTO provided a range of training to apprentices, trainees, jobseekers and the general public in the areas of electrical, mechanical, fabrication/welding and engineering production. The trainers were all ex-tradespeople who were also qualified workplace assessors and trainers.

For this case study, the training provided to apprentices in the fabrication/welding area was used. The training provided was tailored to suit the employer and the apprentice. The RTO developed an individual training program for each apprentice. This program was also a record of which competencies have been achieved by the apprentice. Additional training, that may not be part of the apprentice's competencies, was provided to suit the specific needs of the employer—for example, training on a particular piece of equipment

The RTO could provide both on- and off-the-job training and assessment. The off-the-job training and assessment was provided in both classroom and workshop environments. The RTO has a commitment to making the off-the-job learning as 'close to real world as possible'. This was done by using machinery that was used on the job by the apprentices and provided a work environment that was as close as possible to their on-the-job experiences—for example, workshop noise level and temperature.

Apprentices attended off-the-job training in one-week blocks. The week timeslot was only a guide and if the apprentice achieved the competencies in less time they were able to return to their workplace. On-the-job training was usually provided by relevant tradespeople, other co-workers and, when necessary, instructors from the RTO.

Assessment was either conducted by on-the-job assessors or assessors from the RTO. During on-site assessment, the RTO was able to observe the employer's work practices and work environment *in situ*. If these were unsuitable, the RTO would recommend that the apprentice be moved to a more suitable environment.

The next site, the aluminium manufacturer, had a history of employing apprentices that briefly lapsed. In 1999 this commitment to apprenticeship training recommenced. The organisation employed six apprentices—four mechanical apprentices and two electrical apprentices. The current arrangement was that apprentices are employed by a GTC and spend approximately 50% of their time with this employer and 50% of their time with other employers as arranged by the GTC. The off-the-job training was conducted by a regional TAFE.

The site had a training co-ordinator who was responsible for training across the organisation; he co-ordinated the apprentice program, and also acted as a trainer in areas such as OH&S, occupational hygiene, personal and organisation development and some specific process training. The training co-ordinator had little direct contact with the apprentices.

Apprentices were directly linked to a maintenance co-ordinator who 'looks after the apprentices while they are here'. During their time at the organisation, the apprentices worked with crews, which included senior 'tradesmen'. Although there was no formal arrangement, it was expected that these tradespeople would 'look after' the apprentice.

The approach to learning and assessment at this site could be described as both conventional and innovative:

- Apprentices were chosen from a structured traineeship program.
- Apprentices complete their off-the-job training at a TAFE institute, there was little communication or liaison between the workplace, GTC or TAFE.
- TAFE took responsibility for off-the-job training and conducted all assessment. The training was described as conventional with the use of modules and a 'lock-step approach'.
- The GTC employed the apprentice but took little interest in the on- or off-the-job training and assessment unless there were problems with progress or behaviour and attitudes.
- The GTC relieved the workplaces of the administrative loads associated with employment of apprentices.
- The employer provided on-the-job training but no formal assessment against Training Package competencies. The workplace assesses each apprentice on issues such as attendance, safety, hand skills, attitudes and behaviour and general progress on a six weekly basis.
- There was no formal attempt to integrate on- and off-the-job learning. The assessment that the workplace did undertake was limited to areas such as a forklift licence that is not a part of the apprenticeship competencies.
- The workplace rotated apprentices on a regular basis to ensure that they were exposed to a broad range of skills.

The next site in this area was an oil refinery which has had an apprentice program since 1954. Apprentice numbers have declined in recent years—from 14 in 1994 to eight in 2000. The refinery had a training co-ordinator who organised and co-ordinated the training for the apprentices and other staff.

The employer currently employed apprentices in mechanical and dual apprenticeships in electrical and instrumentation. Apprentices were given a set of skills (competencies) that they must achieve by the end of their apprenticeship. These were monitored by the training co-ordinator. These competencies were enterprise based and had no formal links with the national industry competency standards.

The training co-ordinator designed an annual 'Apprentice Movement Program' whereby each apprentice spent three to six months in each of the refinery's four operations areas. In addition to this, apprentices completed specific assignments in reliability workshops, inspection, drawing office and integrated machinery inspection.

The training co-ordinator also assisted the apprentices with issues such as time management. The training co-ordinator aligned the on-the-job learning and work around the TAFE modules wherever possible.

On-the-job training was conducted by relevant tradespeople. Some training was provided on site but off the job in OH&S, environment, compulsory safety, equal opportunity training and personal computer skills.

On-the-job, in house, assessment occurred through a process called 'quarterly reviews'. These reviews consisted of:

- The apprentice's own log of skills and experiences gained in the three-month period.
- Comments from team leaders on the 'Apprentice Appraisal Report'. This was a behavioural evaluation.
- Team leaders' evaluation of the apprentice's skills.
- An interview with the training co-ordinator. During the interview apprentices were asked questions about the skills and knowledge they have acquired during the last period. If they did not know the answer to a particular question, they are asked to learn about it and come back a week later. If an apprentice was having difficulties with a particular subject, the training co-ordinator would attempt to place him or her in an

area where exposure to those skills would occur. There is also discussion of the 'Apprentice's Appraisal Report' and any additional training needs were identified arising from this appraisal. The training co-ordinator also sought feedback about the apprentice program.

- The training co-ordinator would also outline what competencies the apprentice was expected to achieve by the next quarterly review.

The off-the-job training and assessment was conducted by TAFE. The apprentices attended TAFE in one-week blocks. The training co-ordinator was informed about the apprentice's progress and results by TAFE.

The last site in this industry area was a specialist metal fabricator with a long history of employing apprentices and continuing their employment after the apprenticeship was completed. The apprentices were selected according to a clear set of criteria, including existing qualifications, pre-apprentice skills and training, interest in the industry and the prospective apprentice's personal qualities. The employer has a commitment to training for all employees and this was demonstrated by the excellent working relationship between the employer and the off-the-job trainer.

The apprentices undertook a combination of on- and off-the-job learning and assessment. A workplace trainer, whose responsibility it was to support the apprentices and to reinforce their learning, supervised the on-the-job learning. The apprentices gained on-the-job knowledge through relevant tradespeople, through discussions with other apprentices and using detailed machine operating manuals.

Off-the-job learning and assessment was undertaken by TAFE, whose instructors were all qualified workplace assessors. The apprentices attended TAFE one day per week where learning and assessment focussed on the underpinning knowledge of the apprentices' tasks and the industry. Resource materials used during the learning at TAFE were also used widely in the on-the-job work environment.

As the employer used specialised equipment, all practical assessment was conducted on the job. TAFE staff conducted the assessment.

Property services

This site was a pest control business. The training package for this area was endorsed in 1998 and traineeships became available in 1999. The employer was also an RTO. The employer had a technical and training manager who was responsible for training with an emphasis on the technical aspects of pest control, he also co-ordinated four field supervisors. The qualification trainees were training to achieve in this case study was Certificate II in Pest Management—Technical. The employer had a structured trainee selection process that involved recommendations by people within the organisation, an interview and aptitude test. Once selected the trainees completed their training in two phases:

Phase 1 (Field Training and Distance Education) had a nominal duration of four weeks but usually takes six weeks. Trainees spent this time working with a field supervisor. During this phase, trainees completed a work log, which described their observations and activities in the field, read print-based learning materials, completed assignments and viewed videos. Assignments were returned to a centralised training centre for marking by qualified assessors. The role of the field supervisor was to complete a checklist of skills that trainees were required to complete prior to formal assessment. Once the checklist was completed, trainees were considered to be ready for formal assessment, which was conducted at a training centre.

Phase 2 (Formal Assessment) was conducted by Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment staff who also have the required industry competencies. The policy was that the assessor must be a different person from the trainer. This was an intensive process with

a teacher: trainer ratio of no more than 2:1, which lasted for one week. This phase was constituted of intensive face-to-face assessment (discussions, role-plays) written assessments and simulated practical activities.

Rural/fisheries/forestry

The case studies selected from the Rural/Fisheries/Forestry industry area were:

- an RTO specialising in wine industry training
- a seafood processing plant
- a veterinary hospital

The RTO provided training in a number of qualifications. The area chosen for the case study was the wine industry, in particular Certificate II and III Food Processing (Wine). All the RTO's trainers had Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessor. The RTO worked closely with each winery to ensure the training was relevant to the individual winery and the trainees' needs. The RTO would either liaise with the training co-ordinator, if the winery was large enough to have such a position, or an equivalent—for example, the chief winemaker.

The RTO provided on- and off-site training and assessment. All training was provided in a winery or vineyard workplace and was undertaken as a traineeship or as individual units on a fee-for-service basis. Trainees, who were usually chosen from existing winery staff, would attend off-the-job training at either their own worksite or at another winery. Training usually took place in a training room or similar depending on the facilities at the individual wineries.

The RTO would also suggest ways to incorporate training into everyday work practices. For example, it was suggested to incorporate OH&S guidelines into the standard operating procedures for machinery. This was seen to provide ongoing training for not only the trainees, but also all other staff that use the machinery. The trainee's buddy or other co-workers would provide further on-the-job training. This would depend on the size of the winery and the number of staff employed. At a larger winery, for example, trainees would usually work with another employee, while at a smaller winery the trainee may work more independently due to the smaller number of staff.

Depending on the requirements of the module, assessment would take place on or off site—for example, OH&S assessment would involve using policies and procedures from the trainee's winery but could be assessed off site. On-the-job assessment would be conducted either by the RTO's assessors or the winery's own on-the-job assessors and when the trainee nominated that they were ready to be assessed. In a larger winery on-the-job assessment would occur more regularly because the winery had trained on-the-job assessors, while at the smaller winery off-the-job assessors would be used thus limiting assessing opportunities to the availability of assessors.

The seafood processing plant has had a trainee program since 1997. A training co-ordinator has recently been employed to organise and co-ordinate the training of all staff including the trainees. A buddy was allocated to all 'new' employees who provided the initial orientation and on-the-job training. The trainees were primarily workers who were already employed by the organisation. Traineeships were offered to all employees and prospective trainees were interviewed by the training co-ordinator who assessed their commitment and suitability for a traineeship. Once selected, the trainees underwent on- and off-the-job training.

As most of the trainees were existing employees at the organisation they already had on-the-job knowledge and experience. Further on-the-job training was provided by the team leader and to a lesser extent, other workers. Off-the-job training was undertaken at a number of sites. Off-the-job training covered modules such as Communication and OH&S and theoretical background to the tasks the employees carried out at their worksite. The

off-the-job training also gave them exposure to other parts of the industry that they may not have experienced in their everyday work environment.

Trainees attended off-the-job training in 'blocks'. This was for a number of days up to a week block depending on the module and training provider. The majority of the off-the-job training was undertaken in five, one-week blocks. Depending on the competency, assessment was either on or off the job. The off-the-job trainers used a variety of assessment methods including oral presentations, practical demonstrations, role-plays and written assessments. The written assessment was minimal, largely due to the literacy levels of a number of the trainees. On-the-job assessment was undertaken by trained on-the-job assessors who were either employed by the organisation or the off-the-job training provider.

The primary off-the-job trainer was currently developing further qualifications for these workers. They currently offered the Certificate II and a degree level course. They were hoping to develop Certificates III as a career pathway for the trainees.

This veterinary hospital had two trainees, one completing Certificate II and the other Certificate III. The training could progress to diploma level. The trainees attended off-the-job training at TAFE, where the main focus was the supply of underpinning knowledge. Assessment was a combination of written assignments, practical tasks and computer-managed learning and assessment.

On-the-job training was supervised by the vet and the practice manager—a senior veterinary nurse. The vet was the official workplace trainer and the practice manager acted as the mentor to the trainees. While these two people were the designated workplace trainers, other staff assist in the training and supervision of the trainees. All staff attended 'tracking sessions' to monitor the trainees' progress.

On-the-job assessment was a combination of the trainees' completing a logbook which details on-the-job work experiences and on-the-job assessment. A qualified workplace assessor must assess all on-the-job competencies. As there was no one with this qualification at the hospital, RTO staff carried out these assessments during their quarterly visits. This was done in conjunction with the workplace trainers. The RTO staff also checked the trainees' logbooks to ensure that all competencies were being addressed and the RTO assessor either validated the workplace trainers' assessment or tested independently on the job.

The hospital was an organisation which valued learning by all its staff. Everyone was encouraged to keep on learning in formal and informal ways. There was an expectation that all staff would explore ways to extend their learning and the hospital supported their efforts in material and other ways. The relatively large size of the hospital also provided plenty of opportunities for people to extend their learning, support each other and move along a career path.

Wholesale/retail

Three case studies were chosen from this industry:

- a pharmacy
- a retail department store
- a pet shop

The pharmacy employed two trainees. One of these trainees was a school-based trainee who was employed by a GTC.

The trainee attended secondary school four days a week and worked in the pharmacy for the other day of the week. The trainee's off-the-job training was co-ordinated through the Pharmacy Guild. She was completing the requirements of a Certificate II in Pharmacy

Retailing by distance through the Pharmacy Guild which provides training in this industry up to diploma level.

The trainee completed workbooks or learning manuals and submitted them by post. She received assessments in the mail and had access to Pharmacy Guild tutors by telephone. Her on-the-job trainer also offered assistance with the completion of her off-the-job assessments. Once a month an off-the-job tutor visited the trainee while she was at school.

The trainee's on-the-job learning was co-ordinated by a workplace trainer. As mentioned, he offered assistance to the trainee to complete off-the-job learning and assessment. The trainer also allocated a buddy to the trainee. The buddy was responsible for the day-to-day training and supervision of the trainee. The workplace trainer regularly checked with the trainee and her buddy about the trainee's progress. The workplace trainer conducts the on-the-job assessment of the trainee. He had qualifications recognised by the Pharmacy Guild although not Workplace Trainer and Assessor qualifications. The assessment was a combination of the trainee completing a logbook of her workplace experiences and the observations and interactions of the workplace trainer and buddies of the trainee.

The host employer also offered additional assistance to the trainees by having opportunities for promotion, a well-defined career path, periodic staff performance awards, access to further training and staff debriefing sessions after significant or difficult events—for example, a difficult customer.

The field officer from the GTC visited the host employer every two months to discuss the trainee's progress. The field officer also had regular contact with the secondary school's vocational education co-ordinator who also maintained contact with the trainee and her host employer.

At the completion of the twelve-month traineeship, the trainee hoped to move into a full-time traineeship with the host employer. She hopes to complete Certificates III and IV and subsequently undertake a degree in Retail Management.

The retail department store employed two trainees completing a one-year retail traineeship. The retail traineeship was offered in two ways: either one day a week off the job at a training centre, learning in a group or all on the job with the trainee working five days a week and doing the modules self-paced. The two trainees interviewed for the case study were completing the traineeship using a combination of on- and off-the-job learning and assessment. One trainee was completing Certificate II Retail Operations and the other Certificate III Retail Operations.

The on-the-job learning was provided by the trainees' co-workers and supervisors. This learning was not seen to be part of the trainees achieving the traineeship competencies but rather training in how to perform everyday tasks and information that was company-specific such as merchandising standards.

The trainees attended the off-the-job training site one day per week. This learning was a combination of theoretical and practical information. The training provider, to the best of its ability, structured the timetabling of the off-the-job learning to coincide with the annual retail calendar of events. For example, learning about stocktaking occurred in June so as to coincide with the on-the-job event and training in merchandising would occur before Christmas.

On-the-job assessment was conducted by both the trainees' on-the-job supervisor (very few of which are trained as workplace assessors), other employees and the off-the-job assessors. The department store conducted its own 'performance assessment' or review of its employees and trainees on a regular (twice a month) basis. Trainees and employees were observed, unknowingly while serving customers and were marked according to 'The Five Star Customer Service Standard'. The observation was conducted by supervisors and managers and by 'shoppers' (the department store employed shoppers who are 'plants' to 'shop and check' on the staff). Staff were given feedback on their performance, detailing

their strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. If the employee was not serving customers in the expected way, he or she may be asked to undertake a 'two-month coaching cycle'.

The off-the-job assessor visited each trainee at his or her workplace every six to eight weeks to monitor progress and observe the training environment. During this time a 'performance assessment' was completed. Its purpose was to maintain the relationship between the trainee, the supervisor and off-the-job trainer. The assessment was not related to the competency standard, but asked questions that monitor the trainee's performance which were answered by both the trainee and his or her on-the-job supervisor. The questions were general and related to the trainee's knowledge of store products and procedures, ability to manage workloads, relationships with customers and other team members, communication skills, showing initiative, punctuality and appearance. Trainees had a separate list of questions to answer themselves about their past and future achievements. These visits also gave the on-the-job supervisor and the trainee an opportunity to discuss any difficulties or problems that may have occurred with the assessor.

Off-the-job assessment was described as 'integrated competency assessments'. These were holistic, integrated activities which assessed the learning of three modules at a time. Trainees produced a manual which they were able to complete during their training day each week. The integrated assessments involved a triangulation of evidence collection:

- gathered data from the workplace, for example documents relating to policies of the particular retail outlet to produce a manual
- after the work in the manual has been assessed as competent, the trainer sought an interview between the supervisor, the trainee and herself to discuss on-the-job performance
- observation of performance on the job (if the trainer was not satisfied with the on-the-job supervisor's report of the trainee's progress)

After completion of a module, the competencies on which it was based were signed off in the trainee's logbook, by the trainee, the on-the-job supervisor and the off-the-job trainer.

The pet shop employed two trainees, both completing a one-year traineeship in Certificate II Retail. All learning and assessment was being undertaken on the job which was delivered jointly by the two employers. The trainees also completed workbooks.

Once, in the first month of the traineeship, the RTO, a private provider and the NAC, sent a trainer to work through the workbooks with them—off the job but on site. The trainer did not visit again, despite requests from the employers.

In the absence of any formal, job-specific training content related to this particular area of retailing, the employers had prepared written documentation of the required maintenance schedule for the shops. This was given to the RTO for inclusion in the training plan. The training plan was never handed to either the trainees or the employers.

Ten months into the traineeships, the RTO lost its authority to conduct training—although remaining an NAC.

Training was now conducted by a new RTO—also a private provider. Since then, a new trainer has been visiting the work site on a weekly basis, spending several hours per week working with the trainees to 'catch them up' with both learning and assessment.

Education

One case study site was selected in the area of education. While these workers are not under a contract of training, it was considered to be useful and relevant to the research to include the site as an example of work-based learning and assessment.

The 'trainees' were existing workers who complete a Certificate III qualification and could go on to complete further qualifications up to degree level. The trainees are employed as education workers and work in sometimes very isolated and remote areas with indigenous communities.

The training, which was delivered by a public training provider, was tailored to suit the individual communities where the trainee was situated. The course had multiple exit points and these exit points were tied directly to the career structure of the workers.

Close links between the training provider and the communities it serves have led to the development of a 'mixed mode' form of conducting most courses, combining community-based study and research, field study and supervised work experience with short intensive residential workshops at the training provider or other regional locations. Due to transportation costs and other considerations, trainees are sometimes unable to attend these workshops and instructors may not be able to visit the trainee. When this occurs, other forms of distance learning delivery were used such as telephone, fax and computer when these facilities were available.

Training was also delivered on site by co-workers who acted as tutors. These tutors also helped develop suitable learning and assessment methods.

Appendix D

Questionnaire

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN EDUCATION, EQUITY AND WORK
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
AND
BOX HILL INSTITUTE

Learning and assessment in traineeships and apprenticeships

Questionnaire

This survey is being conducted as part of a study looking at ways in which apprentices and trainees learn and have their learning assessed, either in their workplace or with a training provider. Your assistance in completing this questionnaire would be most appreciated. The answers you give will be kept confidential. Most questions require you to tick a box or circle an answer. There are some questions that will require a short written response.

PART A: Your experiences of learning at work

1.

This question is asking you to think about the training and learning you do in your workplace.

It is asking for your ideas on two things. Firstly we would like to know **how important** you think the following aspects are in helping you to learn at work. Secondly we would like to know if **these aspects are currently happening in your workplace.**

** Using the following scale, **please circle one response** for each aspect to indicate how important this is in helping you learn:*

N/A = Not applicable 3 = Important 2 = Of some importance 1 = Not important

** Then **circle either 'Yes' or 'No'** to indicate if this is currently happening in your workplace.*

		IMPORTANT	OF SOME IMPORTANCE	NOT IMPORTANT	CURRENTLY HAPPENING IN YOUR WORKPLACE?	
a)	There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while at work	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
b)	The trainers in your workplace are well trained	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
c)	There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
d)	There is time allowed for you to practise the skills you are learning in your workplace	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
e)	Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
f)	Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
g)	Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
h)	Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
i)	Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
j)	At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
k)	You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No

** Using the following scale, **please circle one response** for each aspect to indicate how important this is in helping you learn:*

N/A = Not applicable 3 = Important 2 = Of some importance 1 = Not important

** Then **circle either 'Yes' or 'No'** to indicate if this is currently happening in your workplace.*

		IMPORTANT	OF SOME IMPORTANCE	NOT IMPORTANT	CURRENTLY HAPPENING IN YOUR WORKPLACE?	
l)	Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
m)	Trainers/employers are interested about your future in the workforce	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
n)	You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
o)	You employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
p)	Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
q)	You are encouraged to take on more difficult & complex tasks over time	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
r)	At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
s)	You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
t)	You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-the-job training	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
u)	You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who work with you	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
v)	Your employer/trainer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
w)	You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
x)	You are able to be formally assessed when you feel you are ready	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
y)	You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
z)	You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No

2.

Do you attend training with an off-site training provider such as TAFE or another training provider as part of your contract of training?

☐ Yes, (if yes, please go to question 3) ☐ No, (if no, please go to question 4)

PART B: Your experiences of learning in an off-site environment

3.

This question is asking you to think about the training and learning you do off the job (e.g. at TAFE or with a private training provider or at your work but away from your regular work site). It is asking for your ideas on two things. Firstly, we would like to know **how important** you think the following aspects are in helping you to learn off the job. Secondly, we would like to know if **these aspects are currently happening in your off-site learning.**

** Using the following scale, **please circle one response** for each aspect to indicate how important this is in helping you learn:*

N/A = Not applicable 3 = Important 2 = Of some importance 1 = Not important

** Then **circle either 'Yes' or 'No'** to indicate if this is currently happening in your workplace.*

		IMPORTANT	OF SOME IMPORTANCE	NOT IMPORTANT	CURRENTLY HAPPENING IN YOUR OFF-JOB TRAINING?	
a)	There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested in the off-site environment	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
b)	The off-job trainers/ teachers are well trained	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
c)	There are opportunities for you to talk to your teachers/trainers about what you would like to learn	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
d)	There are opportunities for you to practice skills that you are not learning in your workplace	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
e)	There are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your on-site training	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
f)	Teachers/trainers take time to talk to you about your job	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
g)	Teachers/trainers are interested about your future in the work force	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No
h)	You have opportunities to talk with your teachers/trainers about what you are learning in your workplace	N/A 3	2	1	Yes	No

** Using the following scale, **please circle one response** for each aspect to indicate how important this is in helping you learn:*

N/A = Not applicable 3 = Important 2 = Of some importance 1 = Not important

** Then **circle either 'Yes' or 'No'** to indicate if this is currently happening in your workplace.*

		IMPORTANT	OF SOME IMPORTANCE	NOT IMPORTANT	CURRENTLY HAPPENING IN YOUR OFF-JOB TRAINING?	
i)	You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who are learning with you	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
j)	You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
k)	You are able to be formally assessed when you feel you are ready	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No
l)	Teachers/trainers are aware and up-to date with what is happening in the workplace	N/A	3	2	1	Yes No

PART C: You and your contract of training

This section of the questionnaire is asking you for some information about yourself and your contract of training.

* Please tick only one (1) box for each question.

4.

(a) Are you completing an

☐ Apprenticeship? ☐ Traineeship?

(b) Which one of the following field of employment are you completing your apprenticeship/traineeship in

☐ Automotive trades? ☐ Hospitality/Tourism?

(c) Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

(d) In what state/territory are you completing your apprenticeship/traineeship?

- ☐ New South Wales
- ☐ Victoria
- ☐ Queensland
- ☐ Western Australia
- ☐ South Australia
- ☐ Tasmania
- ☐ Australian Capital Territory
- ☐ Northern Territory

(e) How many years have you been employed as an apprentice/trainee?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ Between 1 and 2 years
- ☐ Between 2 and 3 years
- ☐ Between 3 and 4 years
- ☐ More than 4 years

(f) How long is your contract of training?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years
- ☐ 4 years
- ☐ more than 4 years
- ☐ not sure

(g) Did you commence your traineeship/apprenticeship while you were at school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(h) Which one of the following description best fits your current employer

- ☐ Private sector?
- ☐ Group Training Scheme?
- ☐ Local government?
- ☐ State government?
- ☐ Commonwealth Government?
- ☐ Other, please specify

.....

(i) Year of birth 19.....

(j) What was the highest previous education level that you completed prior to you commencing your traineeship/apprenticeship?

☐ Year 9 or less ☐ Year 10

☐ Year 11 ☐ Year 12

☐ Trade certificate ☐ Other, please specify

.....

(k) What location best describes where you are undertaking your apprenticeship/traineeship?

☐ Capital City ☐ Regional city

☐ Country town ☐ Rural/remote area

5.

In your opinion, what changes should be made to increase the effectiveness of the learning and assessment practices that are part of your contract of training?

.....

.....

.....

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Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Please place it in the reply-paid envelope and post it back to the University of South Australia

Appendix E

Demographic data on apprentices and trainees

Apprentices

In this sample, 423 respondents identified themselves as completing an apprenticeship: 95% in the automotive trades and 4.7% in the hospitality industry. The majority of apprentices were male (93%). The table below shows the geographical distribution of the apprentices. The majority of the respondents (87%) were located in the three States of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

Distribution of apprentices by State/Territory

State/Territory	n	% of cases
New South Wales	151	35.7
Victoria	117	27.7
Queensland	98	23.2
Western Australia	2	0.5
South Australia	29	6.9
Tasmania	14	3.3
Australian Capital Territory	9	2.1
Northern Territory	3	0.7
Missing	-	-
Total	**423**	**100.0**

Twenty-seven per cent were undertaking their contract of training in a capital city and a further 40% were located in a regional city. 28% of apprentices worked in country towns. Four per cent were employed in rural and remote areas of Australia.

Nearly one-half (48%) were in the fourth year of their contract of training, with approximately equal proportions in the other years.

The majority of apprentices were employed in the private sector (78%). Sixteen per cent were employed as part of a group training scheme. Two per cent of apprentices were employed by local government and two per cent by each of State and Federal Governments.

The mean age of the apprentices was 19.4 years. 82% of apprentices were aged between 17 and 23 years of age.

Fourteen per cent of respondents had commenced their apprenticeship whilst they were at school.

The table below shows the highest level of education that respondents had completed prior to commencing their apprenticeship.

Respondents' highest level of education completed

Highest year of education completed	n	% of cases
Year 9 or less	13	3.1
Year 10	114	27.3
Year 11	76	18.2
Year 12	172	41.2
Trade certificate	15	3.6
Other	27	6.5
Missing	6	-
Total	**423**	**100.0**

Twelve per cent of apprentices reported that they were undertaking contracts of training that contained no off-site training with another provider. Of these respondents, 76% were employed in the automotive trades, with the remaining 24% employed in the hospitality industry.

Trainees

172 respondents in the sample identified themselves as completing a traineeship. Four per cent were completing a traineeship in the automotive trades; 96% in the hospitality industry. The following table shows the geographical distribution of the trainees.

Distribution of trainees by State/Territory

State/Territory	n	% of cases
New South Wales	17	9.9
Victoria	37	21.5
Queensland	96	55.8
Western Australia	3	1.7
South Australia	6	3.5
Tasmania	10	5.8
Australian Capital Territory	2	1.2
Northern Territory	1	0.6
Missing	-	-
Total	**172**	**100.0**

Twenty-seven per cent were undertaking their contract of training in a capital city. A further 42% were located in a regional city. Twenty-two per cent of trainees worked in country towns. Six per cent were employed in rural and remote areas of Australia.

Over one-half of the respondents (58%) had been employed as trainees for less than one year and 34% had been employed as a trainee for up to two years. Six per cent had been employed for between two and three years as a trainee, whilst the remaining 2% had been trainees for three years or more.

The majority of trainees were employed in the private sector (60%). Twenty-seven per cent were employed as part of a group training scheme. Two per cent were employed by local government and four per cent by each of the State And Federal Governments.

The mean age of trainees was 23.4 years. Twenty-six per cent of respondents had commenced their traineeship whilst they were at school.

The table below shows the highest level of education respondents had completed prior to commencing their traineeship.

Trainees' highest level of education completed

Highest year of education completed	n	% of cases
Year 9 or less	8	4.8
Year 10	42	25.0
Year 11	26	15.5
Year 12	69	41.1
Trade certificate	4	2.4
Other	19	11.3
Missing	4	-
Total	**172**	**100.0**

Eighty-seven trainees were undertaking contracts of training that did not contain any off-site training component. All but four of these trainees were employed in the hospitality industry.

Appendix F

Further tables and statistical tests of significance

Apprentices' ratings of importance of aspects in their workplace in assisting them to learn

Various aspects in their workplace environment	Not applicable		Not important		Of some importance		Important		Missing data
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while you are at work	30	7.4	32	7.9	108	26.6	236	58.1	17
The trainers in your workplace are effective instructors	9	2.2	5	1.2	27	6.5	374	90.1	8
There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	7	1.7	12	2.9	81	19.7	312	75.7	11
There is time allowed for you to practise the skills you are learning in your workplace	7	1.7	8	1.9	78	18.9	320	77.5	10
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	14	3.4	8	1.9	75	18.2	316	76.5	10
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	10	2.4	9	2.2	92	22.3	301	73.1	11
Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	8	2.0	14	3.4	67	16.3	321	78.3	13
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	3	0.7	19	4.6	84	20.4	305	74.2	12
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	4	1.0	12	2.9	52	12.6	346	83.6	9
At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	32	7.7	43	10.4	144	34.9	194	47.0	10

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Not applicable		Not important		Of some importance		Important		Missing data
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	2	0.5	3	0.7	49	11.8	360	87.0	9
Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	4	1.0	7	1.7	71	17.1	332	80.2	9
Trainers/employers are interested in your future in the workforce	7	1.7	17	4.1	95	23.0	294	71.2	10
You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	13	3.2	15	3.7	68	16.7	312	76.5	15
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	6	1.5	22	5.3	87	21.1	297	72.1	11
Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	19	4.6	40	9.7	151	36.7	202	49.0	11
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time	2	0.5	6	1.5	33	8.0	369	90.0	13
At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	5	1.2	10	2.4	57	13.8	340	82.5	11
You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	11	2.7	19	4.6	136	33.0	246	59.7	11
You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-site training	17	4.1	30	7.3	158	38.4	206	50.1	12
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with people who work with you	10	2.4	23	5.6	117	28.5	261	63.5	12
Your employer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	5	1.2	15	3.6	51	12.4	340	82.7	12
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	62	15.2	10	2.4	65	15.9	272	66.5	14
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel ready	93	22.6	40	9.7	96	23.4	182	44.3	12
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	6	1.5	6	1.5	94	22.8	307	74.3	10
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	4	1.0	5	1.2	29	7.1	373	90.8	12

Apprentices' ratings of importance of aspects in their off-site learning environment in assisting them to learn

Various aspects in the off-site learning environment	Not applicable		Not important		Of some importance		Important		Missing data
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested in the off-site environment	15	4.1	5	1.4	46	12.7	296	81.8	10
The off-the-job trainers/teachers are effective instructors	3	0.8	0	0.0	16	4.4	345	94.8	8
There are opportunities for you to talk to your teachers/trainers about what you would like to learn	17	4.7	9	2.5	63	17.4	273	75.4	10
There are opportunities for you to practice skills that you are not learning in your workplace	9	2.5	4	1.1	32	8.9	316	87.5	11
There are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your on-site training	10	2.8	15	4.2	68	18.9	267	74.2	12
Teachers/trainers take time to talk to you about your job	7	1.9	16	4.4	106	29.3	233	64.4	10
Teachers/trainers are interested about your future in the work force	5	1.4	27	7.4	87	24.0	244	67.2	9
You have opportunities to talk with your teachers/trainers about what you are learning in your workplace	6	1.7	10	2.8	106	29.4	239	66.2	11
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who are learning with you	9	2.5	5	1.4	78	21.7	268	74.4	12
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed	10	2.8	3	0.8	37	10.5	304	85.9	18
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel you are ready	22	6.3	21	6.0	83	23.7	224	64.0	22
Teachers/trainers are aware and up to date with what is happening in the workplace	4	1.1	8	2.3	61	17.2	282	79.4	17

Comparing aspects of the workplace environment experiences for apprentices in workplace-only and integrated contracts of training

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job		Yes	No	
	Not important	13	6	**19**
	Of some importance	75	8	**83**
	Important	271	34	**305**
Total		**359**	**48**	**407**

(X^2 (*df* = 2, N = 407) = 7.64, *p* = <0.05)
Cramer's V = .12

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace		Yes	No	
	Not important	8	4	**12**
	Of some importance	48	3	**51**
	Important	305	41	**346**
Total		**361**	**48**	**409**

(X^2 (*df* = 2, N = 409) = 7.10, *p* = <0.05)
Cramer's V = .13

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time		Yes	No	
	Not important	5	1	**6**
	Of some importance	24	9	**33**
	Important	331	38	**369**
Total		**360**	**48**	**408**

(X^2 (*df* = 2, N = 408) = 8.55, *p* = <0.05)
Cramer's V = .15

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace		Yes	No	
	Not important	2	3	**5**
	Of some importance	24	5	**29**
	Important	333	40	**373**
Total		**359**	**48**	**407**

(X^2 (*df* = 2, N = 407) = 12.41, *p* = <0.01)
Cramer's V = .18

Trainees' ratings of importance of aspects in their workplace in assisting them to learn

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Not applicable		Not important		Of some importance		Important		Missing data
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested (to count towards your qualification) while you are at work	4	2.4	5	3.0	37	22.0	122	72.6	4
The trainers in your workplace are effective instructors	4	2.4	3	1.8	25	14.7	138	81.2	2
There are opportunities for you to talk to your employer/trainer about what you would like to learn	2	1.2	1	0.6	34	20.1	132	78.1	3
There is time allowed for you to practise the skills you are learning in your workplace	3	1.8	4	2.4	22	13.0	140	83.3	3
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to attend workshops and classes which count towards the study for your qualification	9	5.4	9	5.4	36	21.6	113	67.7	5
Whilst at work there are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your off-site training	21	12.4	9	5.3	32	18.9	107	63.3	3
Trainers/employers correct your mistakes	1	0.6	3	1.8	17	10.2	146	87.4	5
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job	0	0	6	3.6	30	17.9	132	78.6	4
Trainers/employers take time to listen to any concerns and difficulties you might be having in the workplace	1	0.6	2	1.2	17	10.1	148	88.1	4
At work there are people who are selected especially to help you with your learning at work	8	4.8	13	7.8	48	28.7	98	58.7	5
You are provided with opportunities to work on your own	5	3.0	5	3.0	37	22.0	121	72.0	4
Trainers/employers help you to solve problems that occur in the workplace	1	0.6	1	0.6	29	17.2	138	81.7	3
Trainers/employers are interested in your future in the workforce	2	1.2	6	3.6	46	27.2	115	68.0	3
You have opportunities to ask questions of other workers	0	0.0	7	4.2	42	25.0	119	70.8	4

Various aspects in the workplace environment	Not applicable		Not important		Of some importance		Important		Missing data
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience	4	2.4	6	3.6	31	18.3	128	75.7	3
Your employer/trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace	13	7.8	14	8.4	52	31.1	88	52.7	5
You are encouraged to take on more difficult and complex tasks over time	6	3.6	4	2.4	24	14.2	135	79.9	3
At work you are given feedback and encouragement about your work performance	1	0.6	2	1.2	20	11.6	146	86.4	3
You are challenged to come up with new or different ways of doing things in the workplace	7	4.1	6	3.6	55	32.5	101	59.8	3
You have opportunities to talk with your employer/trainer about what you are learning in your off-site training	24	14.3	12	7.1	38	22.6	94	56.0	4
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with people who work with you	6	3.6	9	5.4	47	28.1	105	62.9	5
Your employer acknowledges that you are at work to learn as well as work	3	1.8	6	3.6	26	15.5	133	79.2	4
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed at work	6	3.6	2	1.2	21	12.5	139	82.7	4
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel ready	10	6.1	6	3.6	31	18.8	118	71.5	7
You are provided with opportunities to learn about why things are the way they are as well as how things work or are done in your workplace	5	3.0	6	3.6	31	18.6	125	74.9	5
You have a good relationship with the people who are training you in the workplace	4	2.4	1	0.6	15	8.9	148	88.1	4

Trainees' ratings of importance of aspects in their off-site learning environment in assisting them to learn

Various aspects in the off-site learning environment	Not applicable		Not important		Of some importance		Important		Missing data
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
There are opportunities for you to have your competence formally tested in the off-site environment	5	6.1	4	4.9	15	18.3	58	70.7	2
The off-the-job trainers/teachers are effective instructors	2	2.4	1	1.2	7	8.4	73	88.0	1
There are opportunities for you to talk to your teachers/trainers about what you would like to learn	1	1.2	3	3.7	17	20.7	61	74.4	2
There are opportunities for you to practice skills that you are not learning in your workplace	3	3.6	1	1.2	14	16.9	65	78.3	1
There are opportunities for you to try out the skills and ideas you have learned from your on-site training	5	6.0	2	2.4	22	26.5	54	65.1	1
Teachers/trainers take time to talk to you about your job	1	1.2	3	3.6	23	27.7	56	67.5	1
Teachers/trainers are interested about your future in the work force	1	1.2	4	4.8	13	15.7	65	78.3	1
You have opportunities to talk with your teachers/trainers about what you are learning in your workplace	0	0	3	3.7	20	24.4	59	72.0	2
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who are learning with you	3	3.7	4	4.9	21	25.6	54	65.9	2
You are aware of exactly what is required of you when you are formally assessed	1	1.3	0	0.0	8	10.3	69	88.5	6
You are able to be formally assessed when you feel you are ready	0	0.0	3	3.8	19	24.4	56	71.8	6
Teachers/trainers are aware and up to date with what is happening in the workplace	1	1.3	3	3.8	16	20.5	58	74.5	6

Comparing aspects of the workplace environment experiences for trainees in workplace-only and integrated contracts of training

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
Trainers/employers take time to talk to you about your job		Yes	No	
	Not important	6		**6**
	Of some importance	18	12	**30**
	Important	59	72	**131**
Total		**83**	**84**	**167**

(X^2 (df = 2, N = 167) = 8.48, p = <0.05)
Cramer's V = .23

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
Your employer/trainer plans work so that you are able to work at a level that best fits with your level of experience		Yes	No	
	Not important	6		**6**
	Of some importance	20	11	**31**
	Important	56	71	**127**
Total		**82**	**82**	**164**

(X^2 (df = 2, N = 164) = 10.39, p = <0.01)
Cramer's V = .25

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
Your employer/ trainer organises work so that you can work at your own pace		Yes	No	
	Not important	11	3	**14**
	Of some importance	27	25	**52**
	Important	38	49	**87**
Total		**76**	**77**	**153**

(X^2 (df = 2, N = 153) = 6.03, p = <0.05)
Cramer's V = .20

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
You are challenged to come up with new of different ways of doing things in the workplace		Yes	No	
	Not important	3	3	**6**
	Of some importance	35	20	**55**
	Important	42	58	**100**
Total		**80**	**81**	**161**

(X^2 (df = 2, N = 151) = 6.65, p = <0.05)
Cramer's V = .20

		Do you attend training with an off-site training provider?		Total
You are given opportunities to share your ideas and learning with other people who work with you		Yes	No	
	Not important	4	5	**9**
	Of some importance	33	14	**47**
	Important	43	61	**104**
Total		**80**	**80**	**160**

(X^2 (*df* = 2, N = 160) = 10.91, *p* = <0.01)
Cramer's V = .26

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